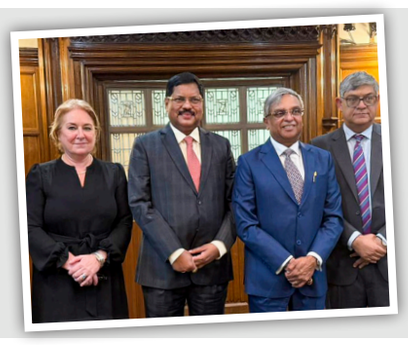
NATION

CJI flays former judges joining politics

≫ Page: 4 ≪



BUSINESS

Adani Airports raises $750M

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SPORTS

Shreyas Iyer could be the leader India needs

≫ Page: 8 ≪

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Thousands of RCB fans gathered outside Vidhana Soudha to catch a glimpse of their favourite players after their IPL win; Just hours later chaos broke out as many without tickets tried to enter Chinnaswamy Stadium, triggering a deadly stampede ***PHOTO: MOHAMMED ASAD***

TIMELIME

1.30pm
RCB arrives at HAL Airport from Ahmedabad

2pm
Police cancels the open bus parade from Vidhana Soudha to Chinnaswamy Stadium

2.30pm
Crowd starts gathering outside Vidhana Soudha and the stadium

4pm
RCB facilitated in Vidhana Soudha

Around 5pm
Crowd outside the stadium grows restless. Thousands attempt to enter the stadium in a hurry from various gates leading to stampede. Cops lathicharge to disperse crowd

I don't want to defend this incident. Our government will not do politics on this
-Siddaramaiah, CM

Did Siddaramaiah review the crowd safety plan? Did DK Shivakumar ensure medical and police arrangements
-BY Vijayendra, State BJP President

JOY TURNS INTO TRAGEDY

11 killed in stampede as 3 lakh turn up to attend RCB felicitation; CM announces Rs 10L aid

BENGALURU, 4 JUNE

What was meant to be a joyous celebration of Royal Challengers Bengaluru's (RCB) maiden IPL title ended in tragedy on Wednesday, as a stampede outside M Chinnaswamy Stadium claimed 11 lives and left 33 others injured.

Chaos broke out when thousands of fans — many allegedly without tickets — attempted to force their way into the stadium. Overwhelmed police shut the gates, but the surging crowd led to panic and suffocation. Despite the unfolding tragedy outside, the felicitation ceremony inside the packed stadium proceeded as scheduled.

Chief Minister Siddaramaiah confirmed the death toll and announced Rs 10 lakh compensation for the families of the deceased. "Most of the deceased are youth. The stadium's capacity is only 35,000, but more than 2 to 3 lakh gathered outside," he said, ordering a magisterial inquiry into the incident. The injured are being treated at Bowring and Vydehi hospitals. Deputy Chief Minister DK Shivakumar stated that the crowd broke the gates, creating a stampede-like situation and that the BJP is busy doing politics over dead bodies.

Mismanagement and security lapses

The Karnataka State Cricket Association (KSCA) hastily arranged the felicitation event, and tickets sold out quickly. However, by 3.30 pm, the number of fans around Gates 10, 12, and 13 swelled far beyond expectations. To prevent unauthorised entry, officials closed all gates — unfortunately trapping and crushing people in the crowd.

The Bengaluru police had earlier issued a traffic advisory restricting entry to only those with valid tickets or passes. They urged attendees to use public transport due to limited parking, but the appeal went largely unheeded.

Some reports suggested a temporary slab placed over a drain near the stadium collapsed due to the weight of people standing on it, contributing to the stampede.

Cops struggled to control crowd

Outnumbered police used mild force in an attempt to manage the chaos. Visuals showed people collapsing and being shifted into ambulances. Several unconscious fans were administered CPR on-site.

According to hospital sources, most deaths were likely due to suffocation. Hospitals witnessed heart-wrenching scenes as families mourned loved ones.

Open-top bus parade scrapped

The much-hyped open-top bus parade from Vidhana Soudha to the stadium was cancelled due to the unmanageable crowd and bad weather. Bengaluru Traffic Police had earlier advised against the route citing congestion risks. The Board of Control for Cricket in India criticised the organisers for inadequate planning and crowd control, adding that the tragedy could have been avoided with better preparation.

Meanwhile, RCB received Rs 20 crore for winning the 18th edition of the league while runners-up Punjab Kings got richer by Rs 12.5 crore. *—PTI*

>>>More on Pages 2, 5 & 8

Chief Minister Siddaramaiah with RCB's Virat Kohli and other team members during a felicitation ceremony at Vidhana Soudha in Bengaluru on Wednesday ***PHOTOS: MOHAMMED ASAD***

Monsoon session to begin from 21 July

NEW DELHI, 4 JUNE

The Monsoon session of Parliament will be held from 21 July to 12 August, Union Minister Kiren Rijiju said on Wednesday. The Cabinet Committee on Parliamentary Affairs, chaired by Defence Minister Rajnath Singh recommended the dates. The recommendation will be sent to the president for convening the session. The announcement by Rijiju comes against the backdrop of a demand for special session by opposition leaders to discuss Operation Sindoor. "Every session is a special session for us," he said, adding that "all important matters" can be discussed during the Monsoon session. The business advisory committee of both the Houses will decide on the issues to be discussed. *—PTI*

>>>More on Page 3

Missing Indian men found in Iran

HOSHIARPUR, 4 JUNE

The family of Amritpal Singh, who went missing in Iran are cautiously optimistic after the Iranian embassy in India said that he was found and released by the police in Tehran. Someone identifying as Amritpal, called the family, saying he was free and needed money. However, they delayed celebrations till there was visual confirmation of his safety. Amritpal, 23, from Bhagowal village in Punjab's Hoshiarpur, Husanpreet Singh of Dhuri in Sangrur and Jaspal Singh of Langroya in SBS Nagar went missing in Iran in May. *—PTI*

>>>More on Page 3

Trump hikes steel & aluminium tariffs to 50%

NEW YORK, 4 JUNE

US President Donald Trump is hiking nearly all of his tariffs on foreign steel and aluminum to a punishing 50 per cent on Wednesday. This move would hammer businesses from automakers to home builders, and likely push up prices for consumers.

Foreign-made steel and aluminium are used in household products such as soup cans and paper clips as well as big-ticket items such as refrigerators and cars. Economists warn that the latest tariffs will squeeze the wallets of both companies and shoppers alike.

What's the tariff rate now?

Steel and aluminium imports are currently taxed at 25 per cent — a rate that both metals have faced across the board since 12 March, when Trump's order to remove steel exemptions and raise aluminium's levy from his previously-imposed 2018 taxes went into effect. *—PTI*

>>>More on Page 7

Caste census to begin in March 2027

NEW DELHI, 4 JUNE

The 2027 Census with caste enumeration will be carried out with the reference date of 1 October, 2026, in snow-bound areas like Ladakh and 1 March, 2027, in the rest of India, the Home Ministry announced on Wednesday.

Population Census-2027will be conducted in two phases along with the enumeration of castes.

"The reference date for Population Census - 2027 will be 00:00 hours of the first day of March 2027.

"For the Union Territory of Ladakh .....the reference date will be 00.00 hours of the first day of October 2026," the ministry said.

PHOTO: REPRESENTATION

The second phase of the census will begin in February 2027 and conclude on 1 March, 2027.

Whether the National Population Register (NPR) will be updated along with the census is unclear.

All preparations for the first phase of Census 2021 were completed and the fieldwork was scheduled to begin in some states/Union Territories from 1 April, 2020. However, the census work was postponed due to the Covid-19 pandemic.

2027 Census, the first digital census giving the citizens an opportunity to self-enumerate, will be conducted at a cost of over Rs 13,000 crore.

On April 30, the Cabinet Committee on Political Affairs chaired by Prime Minister Narendra Modi decided to include caste enumeration in the upcoming census.

While some states have conducted surveys to enumerate castes, these surveys have varied in transparency and intent, with some conducted purely from a "political angle, creating doubts in society", the government had said. *—PTI*

2010 LEGAL BATTLE

There is a gurdwara, let it be: SC rejects Delhi Waqf board's claim

NEW DELHI, 4 JUNE

The Supreme Court on Wednesday dismissed a plea by the Delhi Waqf Board claiming that a property in the capital's Shahdara area was a "Waqf property" and a Gurudwara has been functioning there since long.

A bench of Justices Sanjay Karol and Satish Chandra Sharma said that the Delhi Waqf Board should relinquish the claim that a Gurudwara existed there.

The bench heard the board's plea challenging a September 2010 Delhi High Court order, which dismissed its suit for possession of the property.

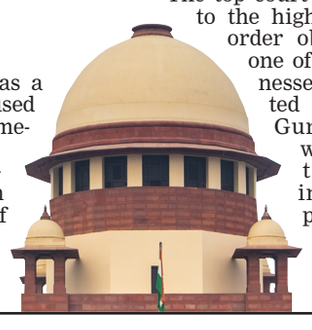
The suit alleged that the property in question was a Waqf property, being used as a Waqf since time immemorial.

- Referring to the findings of the trial judge in the matter, the Waqf board counsel said one of the witness of the defendant himself admitted that there was a mosque there.

Referring to the findings of the trial judge in the matter, the Waqf board counsel said one of the witness of the defendant himself admitted that there was a mosque and "some kind of a Gurudwara" was made there but it was not registered.

"Not some kind of a Gurudwara, it is a fully functional Gurudwara," the bench said.

The top court referred to the high court's order observing one of the witnesses admitted that the Gurudwara was functioning in the property since 1947. *—PTI*



YouTuber in contact with Jyoti held for espionage

CHANDIGARH, 4 JUNE

Jasbir Singh, a Punjab-based YouTuber with 1.1M subscribers, has been arrested for allegedly being part of a terror-backed espionage network linked to Pakistani intelligence and army officials. Police said Singh was in close contact with influencer Jyoti Malhotra, who was earlier detained on spying charges. Singh, from Mahlan village in Rupnagar district, was reportedly connected to Pakistani Intelligence Operative Shakir (also known as Jutt Randhawa) and Ehsan-ur-Rahim alias Danish, a Pakistani High Commission official recently expelled from New Delhi for espionage. His electronic devices held multiple Pakistan-based contacts, now under forensic scrutiny. *—PTI*

>>>More on Page 3

HC to RaGa: Free speech doesn't mean defaming Army

LUCKNOW, 4 JUNE

The Allahabad High Court has ruled that freedom of speech does not extend to making defamatory statements against individuals or the Indian Army, while dismissing Congress leader Rahul Gandhi's plea to quash a summons in a defamation case.

Justice Subhash Vidyarthi of the Lucknow bench, in a verdict dated 29 May, observed a prima facie case against Gandhi for allegedly making derogatory remarks against the Army during his Bharat Jodo Yatra in 2022. The court upheld a lower court's February order summoning the Leader of Opposition in the Lok Sabha to face trial.

The case was filed by Udai Shanker Srivastava, a retired Director from the Border Roads Organisation, holding a rank equivalent to Colonel in the Indian Army. Srivastava alleged that Gandhi, on 16 December 2022 in Lucknow, made disparaging comments regarding the 9 December 2022 face-off between Indian and Chinese troops in Arunachal Pradesh. Srivastava claimed the remarks were "false and baseless," aimed at demoralising the Army and eroding public faith in it. The court reiterated that the right to free speech is subject to reasonable restrictions under Constitution. *—PTI*

>>>More on Page 3

RCB fans gather outside Vidhana Soudha to get a glimpse of the IPL trophy-winning team on Wednesday; Right: An injured fan is rushed to the hospital later in the day after a stampede broke out at Chinnaswamy Stadium where RCB had an event ***PHOTO: PTI***

Uncontrollable fans, unprepared officials led to deadly stampede

Cops outnumbered as ticketless fans scale walls to enter stadium

BENGALURU, 4 JUNE

A mound of shoes and sandals lying here and there and some pieces of what appeared to be sports apparel and merchandise were the telltale signs of the stampede that broke out in the immediate vicinity of the Chinnaswamy stadium here, leading to the deaths of 11 persons and injuries to 33 enthusiasts. "I don't know what we did wrong...we had tickets," an exasperated RCB supporter wondered outside the Chinnaswamy stadium, watching what was meant to be a day of celebration become a day of mourning after 11 fans were killed in a mad scramble to attend the team's IPL victory parade here.

Thirty three of the team's injured supporters had to be hospitalised after a chaotic day. "When one organises a victory celebration of this magnitude...safety and security measures need to be taken," BCCI secretary Devajit Saikia told PTI, taking note of the lack of preparedness.

The tickets for the hastily-arranged engagement programme were sold in a jiffy, but the fans crowded all the gates 12, 13 (main gates) and 10 (club house entrance) with not enough security to control them.

The number swelled to unexpected levels around 3.30pm and it forced the police and stadium security officials to close all the gates to prevent the ticket-less from squeezing in along with the ones who had valid tickets.

Many youths managed to climb branches of huge trees and frenzied young men clung to poles and even scaled huge walls to gain entry into the stadium to catch a glimpse of their stars, all at the same time. Nothing could deter them and crowds continued to swell and the chants of 'RCB' in the busy area brought in an atmosphere of carnival on the streets of Bengaluru. As jubilation intensified, the crowds turned frantic and were uncontrollable, steadily leading to a stampede. Soon, wails and shouting began to be heard and even before one could realize what was happening, people fell down and became unconscious, who had to be rushed to nearby hospitals. While all this was happening, many youths still chose to continue to sit on compound walls near the Saint Mark's Cathedral and not even the continuous blare of sirens of police vehicles could stop them from shouting to cheer their beloved cricket team. Police men and women though did their best to regulate crowd in and around the stadium area, they were heavily outnumbered as the maiden win became a youth cultural extravaganza. Appeals from the police informing people that "stadium is full...stadium is full," and urging them to disperse fell on deaf ears.

Fans climb a tree outside Chinnaswamy Stadium to catch a glimpse of the RCB team, in Bengaluru on Wednesday; Footwears lie on the ground outside the stadium following the stampede that killed 11 ***PHOTOS: PTI***

> **We came to watch our stars but got beaten up. I bought tickets for the function, but was not even able to enter the stadium. Police suddenly blocked all the roads and closed all the entrances to the venue, and suddenly they started lathi-charging near the main gate**
>
> -Prashant Shetty, post-graduate student and RCB fan

"We came to watch our stars. I bought tickets for the function but was not even able to enter the stadium. Police suddenly blocked all the roads and closed all the entrances to the venue, and suddenly they started lathi-charging near the main gate," said Prashant Shetty, a post-graduate student who came along with a few of his friends.

"I don't know what we did wrong. We were invited for the function, bought tickets but in the end got beaten up and abused. Terrible day for fans like us," he added.

At around 4.30 pm many more came from the nearby Cubbon Park metro station, worsening the situation and the police had to resort to mild use of force to disperse the huge gathering.

At Gate No. 10, the situation was grimmer as women and children were shoved around forcefully, and even this reporter was pushed to a corner by a police official with a lathi who also hurled some swear words in local dialect.

Several ticket-holders had no choice but to make a retreat from the venue albeit thankful that they escaped unscathed from what became a stampede.

Even from a distance, it was disturbing to see women fainting and some others getting crushed under the feet of jostling fans.

The fan engagement function lasted close to an hour and the team went back to the hotel around 6.30 pm but the fans still remained near the stadium creating further traffic block and chaos, before slowly moving away after a tragic day. *—PTI*

LOP leader R Ashoka and BJP President BY Vijayendra visit the stampede victims; CM Siddaramaiah meets an injured ***PHOTO: PTI***

BJP demands judicial probe into stampede

BENGALURU, 5 JUNE

BJP President BY Vijayendra on Wednesday demanded a judicial inquiry into the tragic stampede during the Royal Challengers Bengaluru (RCB) IPL victory celebrations, which claimed at least 11 lives. He blamed the Congress-led state government for negligence and lack of preparedness.

Vijayendra alleged that the government organised the event near Vidhana Soudha despite warnings from senior police officials. "They pressurised the police and forcefully conducted the event. People pelted stones and slippers. Luckily, no tragedy occurred there, but near Chinnaswamy Stadium, the situation turned deadly," he told reporters.

Criticising the absence of safety arrangements, he added, "Lakhs gathered last night. The government should have planned better. There were no ambulances or police inside the stadium. What nonsense is this?"

He visited victims at a city hospital and claimed the death toll may rise, stating several, including children, remain in critical condition.

Drawing comparisons with India's World Cup celebrations in Mumbai, Vijayendra said the Bengaluru event lacked basic planning and emergency infrastructure. "The Chief Minister must take responsibility. I urge him to refer this incident for judicial inquiry," he said.

Prime Minister Narendra Modi also expressed grief, calling the incident "absolutely heartrending."

The state government has yet to issue an official response to the BJP's demands. *—PTI*

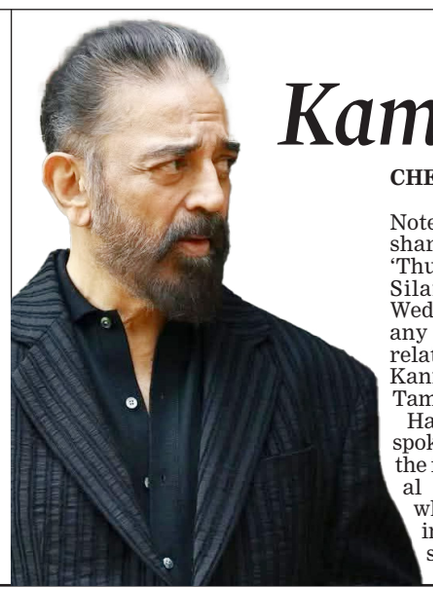
Chief Minister Siddaramaiah, Deputy Chief Minister DK Shivakumar and Governor Thaawarchand Gehlot felicitate RCB players for their IPL victory at Vidhana Soudha in Bengaluru on Wednesday; Siddaramaiah with his grandson during the function; A fan crowdsurfs ***PHOTOS: MOHAMMED ASAD***

3 run over by truck in Nanjangud

MYSURU, 4 JUNE

Three people were killed on the spot when a speeding truck crashed into the bike they were travelling on. The accident took place on Hullahalli Main Road in Nanjangud taluk on Wednesday. Police said the deceased are Chikkaswamy, 45; his wife Roopa, 38, both residents of Hanchipura; and Channamallamma, 55, of Kaniyuru in Nanjangud taluk. The truck driver was arrested, and the truck with Tamil Nadu registration was seized. ***— Salar News***

LANGUAGE CONTROVERSY



Kamal avoids comment on row

CHENNAI, 4 JUNE

Noted actor Kamal Haasan shared the stage with the 'Thug Life' stars including Silambarasan here on Wednesday, but did not make any comments on the row related to his remark that Kannada was born out of Tamil language.

Haasan, in his address, spoke about the hard work of the film crew and international quality of technicians, who were behind the making of 'Thug Life, which is set for release on 5 June, and added, "I should thank the entire state of Tamil Nadu which stood behind me." His comment assumes significance in the wake of the controversy following his remark on the evolution of Kannada langauge.

The actor said he also fully realised the meaning of the "Uyire, Urave, Tamizhe," slogan he used in his public addresses. The three words, when used together conveys a deep love for the Tamil language and his great bond with it.

Incidentally, Haasan used this tagline even in the 'Thug Life' promotional event in Chennai during which he commented on the development of Kannada language.

This is the first public appearance of Haasan after the Karnataka High Court criticised him on 3 June in connection with his 'Kannada was born out of Tamil' comment.

Producers of 'Thug Life' informed the Karnataka High Court that the movie will not be released in Karnataka on 5 June when it will be screened across the country. *—PTI*

Karnataka Media Academy and the Press Club of Bengaluru honoured Banu Mushtaq and Deepa Bhasthi — recipients of the International Booker Prize — for bringing global recognition to Kannada literature, on Wednesday ***PHOTO: SALAR***

Govt avoiding Pahalgam discussion: Cong

The Oppn party accuses Centre of running away from holding spl Parl session

NEW DELHI, 4 JUNE

The Congress on Wednesday alleged that the government has announced the start of the Monsoon session of Parliament 47 days before it is due in order to run away from the demand of the party and INDIA bloc for an immediate special session to discuss the Pahalgam attack and the Centre's failure to bring the terrorists to justice.

Parliamentary Affairs Minister Kiren Rijiju on Wednesday said the Monsoon session of Parliament will be held from 21 July to 12 August. The Cabinet Committee on Parliamentary Affairs, chaired by Defence Minister Rajnath Singh, has recommended the dates, he told reporters here.

In a post on X, Congress general secretary, communications, Jairam Ramesh, said normally the dates for a Parliament session are announced a few days in advance, but "never have the dates been declared 47 days before a session is due".

"This has been done solely to run away from the demand being made repeatedly by the Indian National Congress and the INDIA parties for an immediate special session to discuss the brutal Pahalgam attacks and the failure to bring the terrorists who did the killings themselves to justice, the impacts of Operation Sindoor and its blatant politicisation, the revelations of the CDS in Singapore, the hyphenation of India and Pakistan, the embedding of China in the Pakistan Air Force, the continuous claims of President Trump on mediation, and the numerous failures of our foreign policy and diplomatic engagements," he said in his post.

"The monsoon session will, however, still be dominated by these issues of supreme national importance. The PM has run away from a special session but will have to answer very tough questions six weeks from now," the Congress leader said.

The announcement by Rijiju comes against the backdrop of a demand for a special session by opposition leaders to discuss Operation Sindoor. *—PTI*

FIR against Delhi judge for forging judicial orders

NEW DELHI, 4 JUNE

A district judge of Patiala House Courts in the national capital has filed a police complaint alleging forged court orders — including an arrest warrant and an asset seizure order — bearing his signature were circulated on social media in New Delhi. The first instance occurred on 31 May, 2024, when an "arrest warrant" order in the name of "State Vs Ms. Ankita" was circulated under his forged signature. The second incident was reported in December, involving a similar asset seizure order dated December 2, 2024, in the name of "State Vs Sanket Suresh Satam", according to the FIR. Both orders falsely listed him as Judicial Magistrate First Class at the District Court in Delhi. The FIR mentioned that the judge never issued such orders, and the documents bore forged signatures. *—PTI*

2 AAP leaders summoned over Rs 2,000 cr 'scam'

NEW DELHI, 4 JUNE

The Delhi government's Anti-Corruption Branch (ACB) has summoned AAP leaders Manish Sisodia and Satyendar Jain over alleged graft in the construction of classrooms in government schools, an official said on Wednesday. Jain has been asked to appear before the ACB on 6 June, while Sisodia has been summoned for questioning on 9 June, he said. The summons come after an FIR was registered by the ACB on 30 April based on allegations of financial irregularities to the tune of Rs 2,000 crore in the construction of over 12,000 classrooms or semi-permanent structures in Delhi government schools. The FIR was registered after obtaining approval under Section 17-A of the Prevention of Corruption Act from the competent authority Joint Commissioner of Police (ACB) Madhur Verma said. *—PTI*

YSRCP stages 'Betrayal Day' across Andhra

AMARAVATI, 4 JUNE

The YSRCP on Wednesday held 'Betrayal Day' protests across Andhra Pradesh, marking one year anniversary of the 2024 election results and subsequent formation of the TDP-led government. Hundreds of YSRCP leaders, cadres and activists took part in marches across the state, including major urban centres like Tirupati, Vijayawada, Anantapur and several others. The NDA alliance comprising TDP, BJP and Janasena secured a landslide victory, winning 164 assembly seats out of 175 and relegating the YSRCP to just 11 seats. The 2024 election results were declared exactly a year ago. Carrying placards and black flags, YSRCP supporters denounced the N Chandrababu Naidu-led government and raised slogans against it. "The distinction of cheating and backstabbing all sections of people in this state goes to Chandrababu Naidu and the alliance leaders," a YSRCP leader told media. *—PTI*

Modi to inaugurate Chenab bridge tomorrow

NEW DELHI, 4 JUNE

Prime Minister Narendra Modi is scheduled to launch multiple development projects worth more than Rs 46,000 crore at Katra in J&K on Friday. He will also inaugurate the Chenab bridge, the world's highest railway arch bridge. Modi will also flag off Vande Bharat trains between Katra and Srinagar. Lauding the Chenab bridge as an architectural marvel, a PMO statement noted that the bridge is built at a height of 359 metres above the river. It is a 1,315-metre-long steel arch bridge engineered to withstand seismic and wind conditions. Vande Bharat train travelling on this bridge between Katra and Srinagar will reduce existing travel time by two-three hours," statement added. *—PTI*

Malaysia backs Indian outreach, snubs Pakistan

NEW DELHI, 4 JUNE

Malaysia turned down a formal request from Pakistan to cancel all outreach events linked to Operation Sindoor, a diplomatic initiative led by Indian MP Sanjay Jha. According to sources cited by India Today TV, the Pakistani embassy tried to persuade Malaysian officials to cancel the programmes, appealing on religious grounds and referring to the "Kashmir matter in the UN".

"You are an Islamic country, we are an Islamic country... don't entertain the Indian delegation, cancel all their programmes," the embassy reportedly said. Despite the pressure, Malaysian authorities allowed all ten events to go ahead as planned.

The Indian delegation, which included MPs from across party lines, had visited Japan, South Korea, Singapore, and Indonesia before arriving in Kuala Lumpur on Saturday. The team included BJP MPs Aparajita Sarangi, Brij Lal, Pradan Baruah, and Hemang Joshi; Trinamool Congress's Abhishek Banerjee; CPM's John Brittas; Congress leader Salman Khurshid; and former Indian ambassador Mohan Kumar.

The delegation met with Malaysia's People's Justice Party (PKR), led by YB Sim Tze Tzin, a former minister under Mahathir Mohamad. Discussions focused on India's counter-terrorism efforts under Operation Sindoor, including precision strikes on terror launchpads in Pakistan, underscoring India's "new normal" approach to cross-border threats.

Addressing the Indian diaspora in Kuala Lumpur, TMC MP Abhishek Banerjee stated that India should only resume dialogue with Pakistan once it agrees to hand over Pakistan-occupied Kashmir.

Sanjay Jha later confirmed that all five countries expressed condolences for the victims of the Pahalgam attack and supported India's counter-terror stance. *—PTI*

The Indian delegation, which included MPs from across party lines, had visited Japan, South Korea, Singapore, and Indonesia before arriving in Kuala Lumpur on Saturday **PHOTO: PTI**

Rahul says lame horses in Cong must retire, BJP asks 'what about you?'

NEW DELHI 4 JUNE

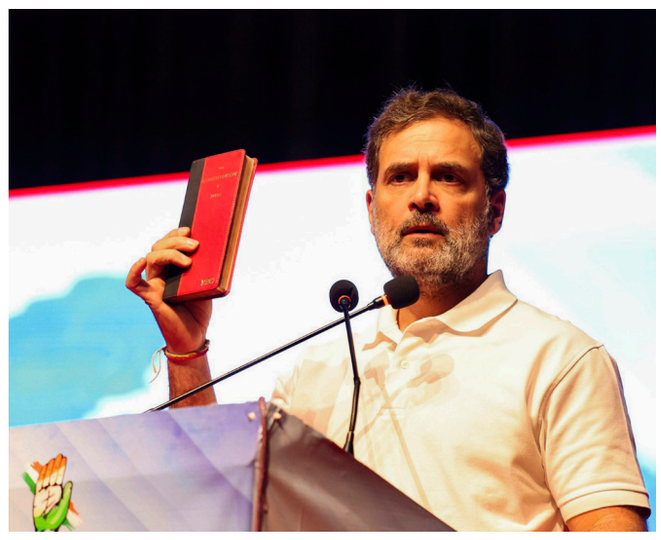
Congress leader Rahul Gandhi addressed party workers and leaders in Bhopal on 3 June to launch the 'Sangathan Srijan Abhiyan' (organisation creation campaign) aimed at revitalising the party's Madhya Pradesh unit, which currently holds no Lok Sabha seats.

Gandhi used a vivid horse analogy to explain his vision for change. "We must distinguish between a race horse, a wedding horse, and a lame (langda) horse," he said, drawing laughter and applause. He described 'race horses' as energetic leaders who work with full dedication, 'wedding horses' as those who are more lethargic or perform ceremonial roles, and 'lame horses' as inefficient old leaders who should be retired.

Referring to former Chief Minister Kamal Nath's comments, Gandhi highlighted the need to stop sending race horses to weddings and wedding horses to races, stressing that the third category — the lame horse — must now be addressed.

He also hinted at factionalism within the party, suggesting some leaders were sympathetic to the BJP, and warned such divisions would not be tolerated.

Gandhi announced a thorough organisational overhaul, beginning with district presidents. He said party decisions should come from the grassroots, with top leadership intervening only when necessary. Performance will be judged objectively based on vote share growth, defence of Congress ideology, and positive relations between workers and leaders.



Congress leader Rahul Gandhi addressed party workers **PHOTO: PTI**

In response, BJP leader Anil Vij mocked Gandhi's analogy, questioning which type of horse Gandhi himself would be. *—Agencies*

Intel collab can beat terrorism, says Bilawal

ISLAMABAD, 4 JUNE

Pakistan Peoples Party (PPP) chairman and former Foreign Minister Bilawal Bhutto-Zardari has said that collaboration between Pakistan's ISI and India's RAW could significantly reduce terrorism in South Asia.

Speaking at a press conference at the United Nations Headquarters in New York, Bhutto-Zardari said, "If ISI and RAW were willing to work together, we would witness a notable drop in terrorism across both India and Pakistan," according to Dawn. The PPP leader is leading a delegation to the

US following the recent India-Pakistan hostilities triggered by the 22 April Pahalgam terror attack. India conducted precision strikes on 7 May, and Pakistan launched retaliatory attempts until 10 May. Ceasefire talks between both countries' Directors General of Military Operations led to a halt in military actions.

Bhutto-Zardari credited US President Donald Trump and Secretary of State Marco Rubio for their role in the ceasefire. However, he cautioned that the risk of conflict remains unless deeper diplomatic engagement is pursued. He proposed a bilateral platform for investigating terror incidents and ensuring accountability, stressing dialogue as the only sustainable path to peace. He also condemned India's suspension of the Indus Waters Treaty, calling it a move to "weaponise water" and warning that any action affecting water supply would be seen as an act of war

Pak foreign minister wants talks, not conflict

Foreign Minister Ishaq Dar said on Wednesday that the likelihood of renewed armed conflict between Pakistan and India is slim, though he warned of a strong response should hostilities occur. Speaking at a press conference about Prime Minister Shehbaz Sharif's recent tour of Turkey, Iran, Azerbaijan and Tajikistan, Dar thanked those countries for their support following the 22 April Pahalgam terror attack that killed 26 people. *—PTI*

Turkish Airlines to ensure compliance with ICAO, DGCA

NEW DELHI, 4 JUNE

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The inspection was conducted from 29 May to June 2, in accordance with Article 16 of the Convention on ICAO International Civil Aviation, it stated, adding that move was aimed at ensuring compliance with both international and national safety regulations. "Turkish Airlines has been directed to address these findings promptly and ensure full compliance with ICAO Standards and Recommended Practices as well as DGCA regulations," the release said.

Turkiye had taken Pakistan's side during Operation Sindoor, which came in the aftermath of the Pahalgam terror attack in which 26 civilians, most of them tourists, were killed. *—PTI*

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Social activist Anjali Damania on Wednesday appeared before the Anti-Corruption Bureau (ACB) and gave detail about a Rs 341 crore "scam" in the agriculture department when it was headed by NCP leader and former Maharashtra cabinet minister Dhananjay Munde.

Damania had earlier filed a corruption complaint against Munde and appeared before the anti-graft agency for enquiry in connection with that.

The activist, who reached ACB headquarters in Worli at around 11.30am, was enquired by officials for more than four hours, an official said. *—PTI*

ERROL MUSK IN AYODHYA

Errol Musk, father of tech billionaire Elon Musk, visited the Ram temple in Ayodhya on Wednesday afternoon and described the experience as "wonderful" and one of the "best things" he has ever done. During his arrival Pran Pratishtha 2.0 ceremony had already begun at Ram Temple, as Tuesday marks first day of the event **PHOTO: PTI**

PUNJAB INFLUENCER IN SOUP

YouTuber in touch with Jyoti held

CHANDIGARH, 4 JUNE

Jasbir Singh, a Punjab-based YouTuber with 1.1M subscribers, has been arrested for allegedly being part of a terror-backed espionage network linked to Pakistani intelligence and army officials. Police said Singh was in close contact with influencer Jyoti Malhotra, who was earlier detained on spying charges.

Singh, from Mahlan village in Rupnagar district, was reportedly connected to Pakistani Intelligence Operative Shakir (also known as Jutt Randhawa) and Ehsan-ur-Rahim alias Danish, a Pakistani High Commission official recently expelled from New Delhi for espionage.

Jasbir Singh and Jyoti Malhotra **PHOTO: PTI**

Punjab Director General of Police Gaurav Yadav said Singh attended the Pakistan National Day event in Delhi at Danish's invitation, met Pakistani army officials and vloggers, and travelled to Pakistan three times between 2020 and 2024. His electronic devices held multiple Pakistan-based contacts, now under forensic scrutiny.

Following Malhotra's arrest, Singh allegedly tried to delete evidence of his communications with Pakistani operatives. He was sent to police remand for three days by a Mohali court.

An FIR has been filed at the State Special Operation Cell in Mohali as investigations continue to dismantle the wider espionage network.Recent arrests in Punjab include people accused of sharing sensitive military information with Pakistan's intelligence and pro-Khalistan figures. *—PTI*

'US scribe maligned Indian institutions in foreign arena'

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Centre has defended in the Delhi High Court its decision to cancel the OCI card of US-based journalist Raphael Satter saying he maligned Indian institutions in the international arena through journalistic activities.

The Centre said Satter conducted journalistic activities without waiting for necessary permission and violated the government's notification and that a "discreet" lookout circular (LOC) was opened against him.

"It has been reported by security agencies that Raphael has been noted for acts of maliciously creating adverse and biased opinions against Indian institutions in the international arena through his journalistic activities and a discreet LOC was opened against him," the Ministry of Home Affairs said in an affidavit.

The Centre said that his revision petition was as a result disposed of and a speaking order dated May 24, 2024 held that there were no grounds to revise the overseas citizen of India (OCI) cancellation order.

The union ministry's affidavit came in response to Satter's plea against cancellation of his OCI card.

Justice Sachin Datta, who is hearing the matter, granted liberty to Satter to file a rejoinder to the government's reply and posted the hearing on 25 August. Satter obtained the OCI status through his marriage and claimed he visited India for family purposes. *—PTI*

Govt avoiding Pahalgam discussion: Cong

The Oppn party accuses Centre of running away from holding spl Parl session

NEW DELHI, 4 JUNE

The Congress on Wednesday alleged that the government has announced the start of the Monsoon session of Parliament 47 days before it is due in order to run away from the demand of the party and INDIA bloc for an immediate special session to discuss the Pahalgam attack and the Centre's failure to bring the terrorists to justice.

Parliamentary Affairs Minister Kiren Rijiju on Wednesday said the Monsoon session of Parliament will be held from 21 July to 12 August. The Cabinet Committee on Parliamentary Affairs, chaired by Defence Minister Rajnath Singh, has recommended the dates, he told reporters here.

In a post on X, Congress general secretary, communications, Jairam Ramesh, said normally the dates for a Parliament session are announced a few days in advance, but "never have the dates been declared 47 days before a session is due".

"This has been done solely to run away from the demand being made repeatedly by the Indian National Congress and the INDIA parties for an immediate special session to discuss the brutal Pahalgam attacks and the failure to bring the terrorists who did the killings themselves to justice, the impacts of Operation Sindoor and its blatant politicisation, the revelations of the CDS in Singapore, the hyphenation of India and Pakistan, the embedding of China in the Pakistan Air Force, the continuous claims of President Trump on mediation, and the numerous failures of our foreign policy and diplomatic engagements," he said in his post.

"The monsoon session will, however, still be dominated by these issues of supreme national importance. The PM has run away from a special session but will have to answer very tough questions six weeks from now," the Congress leader said.

The announcement by Rijiju comes against the backdrop of a demand for a special session by opposition leaders to discuss Operation Sindoor. *—PTI*

FIR against Delhi judge for forging judicial orders

NEW DELHI, 4 JUNE

A district judge of Patiala House Courts in the national capital has filed a police complaint alleging forged court orders — including an arrest warrant and an asset seizure order — bearing his signature were circulated on social media in New Delhi. The first instance occurred on 31 May, 2024, when an "arrest warrant" order in the name of "State Vs Ms. Ankita" was circulated under his forged signature. The second incident was reported in December, involving a similar asset seizure order dated December 2, 2024, in the name of "State Vs Sanket Suresh Satam", according to the FIR. Both orders falsely listed him as Judicial Magistrate First Class at the District Court in Delhi. The FIR mentioned that the judge never issued such orders, and the documents bore forged signatures. *—PTI*

2 AAP leaders summoned over Rs 2,000 cr 'scam'

NEW DELHI, 4 JUNE

The Delhi government's Anti-Corruption Branch (ACB) has summoned AAP leaders Manish Sisodia and Satyendar Jain over alleged graft in the construction of classrooms in government schools, an official said on Wednesday. Jain has been asked to appear before the ACB on 6 June, while Sisodia has been summoned for questioning on 9 June, he said. The summons come after an FIR was registered by the ACB on 30 April based on allegations of financial irregularities to the tune of Rs 2,000 crore in the construction of over 12,000 classrooms or semi-permanent structures in Delhi government schools. The FIR was registered after obtaining approval under Section 17-A of the Prevention of Corruption Act from the competent authority Joint Commissioner of Police (ACB) Madhur Verma said. *—PTI*

YSRCP stages 'Betrayal Day' across Andhra

AMARAVATI, 4 JUNE

The YSRCP on Wednesday held 'Betrayal Day' protests across Andhra Pradesh, marking one year anniversary of the 2024 election results and subsequent formation of the TDP-led government. Hundreds of YSRCP leaders, cadres and activists took part in marches across the state, including major urban centres like Tirupati, Vijayawada, Anantapur and several others. The NDA alliance comprising TDP, BJP and Janasena secured a landslide victory, winning 164 assembly seats out of 175 and relegating the YSRCP to just 11 seats. The 2024 election results were declared exactly a year ago. Carrying placards and black flags, YSRCP supporters denounced the N Chandrababu Naidu-led government and raised slogans against it. "The distinction of cheating and backstabbing all sections of people in this state goes to Chandrababu Naidu and the alliance leaders," a YSRCP leader told media. *—PTI*

Modi to inaugurate Chenab bridge tomorrow

NEW DELHI, 4 JUNE

Prime Minister Narendra Modi is scheduled to launch multiple development projects worth more than Rs 46,000 crore at Katra in J&K on Friday. He will also inaugurate the Chenab bridge, the world's highest railway arch bridge. Modi will also flag off Vande Bharat trains between Katra and Srinagar. Lauding the Chenab bridge as an architectural marvel, a PMO statement noted that the bridge is built at a height of 359 metres above the river. It is a 1,315-metre-long steel arch bridge engineered to withstand seismic and wind conditions. Vande Bharat train travelling on this bridge between Katra and Srinagar will reduce existing travel time by two-three hours," statement added. *—PTI*

Malaysia backs Indian outreach, snubs Pakistan

NEW DELHI, 4 JUNE

Malaysia turned down a formal request from Pakistan to cancel all outreach events linked to Operation Sindoor, a diplomatic initiative led by Indian MP Sanjay Jha. According to sources cited by India Today TV, the Pakistani embassy tried to persuade Malaysian officials to cancel the programmes, appealing on religious grounds and referring to the "Kashmir matter in the UN".

"You are an Islamic country, we are an Islamic country... don't entertain the Indian delegation, cancel all their programmes," the embassy reportedly said. Despite the pressure, Malaysian authorities allowed all ten events to go ahead as planned.

The Indian delegation, which included MPs from across party lines, had visited Japan, South Korea, Singapore, and Indonesia before arriving in Kuala Lumpur on Saturday. The team included BJP MPs Aparajita Sarangi, Brij Lal, Pradan Baruah, and Hemang Joshi; Trinamool Congress's Abhishek Banerjee; CPM's John Brittas; Congress leader Salman Khurshid; and former Indian ambassador Mohan Kumar.

The delegation met with Malaysia's People's Justice Party (PKR), led by YB Sim Tze Tzin, a former minister under Mahathir Mohamad. Discussions focused on India's counter-terrorism efforts under Operation Sindoor, including precision strikes on terror launchpads in Pakistan, underscoring India's "new normal" approach to cross-border threats.

Addressing the Indian diaspora in Kuala Lumpur, TMC MP Abhishek Banerjee stated that India should only resume dialogue with Pakistan once it agrees to hand over Pakistan-occupied Kashmir.

Sanjay Jha later confirmed that all five countries expressed condolences for the victims of the Pahalgam attack and supported India's counter-terror stance. *—PTI*

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Rahul says lame horses in Cong must retire, BJP asks 'what about you?'

NEW DELHI 4 JUNE

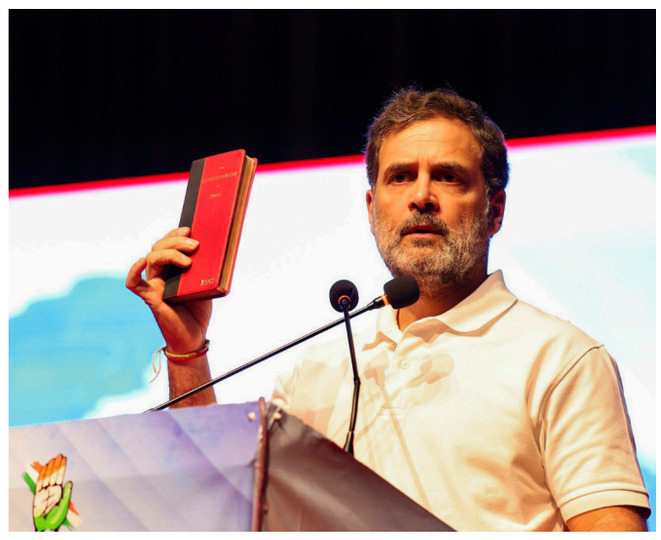
Congress leader Rahul Gandhi addressed party workers and leaders in Bhopal on 3 June to launch the 'Sangathan Srijan Abhiyan' (organisation creation campaign) aimed at revitalising the party's Madhya Pradesh unit, which currently holds no Lok Sabha seats.

Gandhi used a vivid horse analogy to explain his vision for change. "We must distinguish between a race horse, a wedding horse, and a lame (langda) horse," he said, drawing laughter and applause. He described 'race horses' as energetic leaders who work with full dedication, 'wedding horses' as those who are more lethargic or perform ceremonial roles, and 'lame horses' as inefficient old leaders who should be retired.

Referring to former Chief Minister Kamal Nath's comments, Gandhi highlighted the need to stop sending race horses to weddings and wedding horses to races, stressing that the third category — the lame horse — must now be addressed.

He also hinted at factionalism within the party, suggesting some leaders were sympathetic to the BJP, and warned such divisions would not be tolerated.

Gandhi announced a thorough organisational overhaul, beginning with district presidents. He said party decisions should come from the grassroots, with top leadership intervening only when necessary. Performance will be judged objectively based on vote share growth, defence of Congress ideology, and positive relations between workers and leaders.



Congress leader Rahul Gandhi addressed party workers **PHOTO: PTI**

In response, BJP leader Anil Vij mocked Gandhi's analogy, questioning which type of horse Gandhi himself would be. *—Agencies*

Intel collab can beat terrorism, says Bilawal

ISLAMABAD, 4 JUNE

Pakistan Peoples Party (PPP) chairman and former Foreign Minister Bilawal Bhutto-Zardari has said that collaboration between Pakistan's ISI and India's RAW could significantly reduce terrorism in South Asia.

Speaking at a press conference at the United Nations Headquarters in New York, Bhutto-Zardari said, "If ISI and RAW were willing to work together, we would witness a notable drop in terrorism across both India and Pakistan," according to Dawn. The PPP leader is leading a delegation to the

US following the recent India-Pakistan hostilities triggered by the 22 April Pahalgam terror attack. India conducted precision strikes on 7 May, and Pakistan launched retaliatory attempts until 10 May. Ceasefire talks between both countries' Directors General of Military Operations led to a halt in military actions.

Bhutto-Zardari credited US President Donald Trump and Secretary of State Marco Rubio for their role in the ceasefire. However, he cautioned that the risk of conflict remains unless deeper diplomatic engagement is pursued. He proposed a bilateral platform for investigating terror incidents and ensuring accountability, stressing dialogue as the only sustainable path to peace. He also condemned India's suspension of the Indus Waters Treaty, calling it a move to "weaponise water" and warning that any action affecting water supply would be seen as an act of war

Pak foreign minister wants talks, not conflict

Foreign Minister Ishaq Dar said on Wednesday that the likelihood of renewed armed conflict between Pakistan and India is slim, though he warned of a strong response should hostilities occur. Speaking at a press conference about Prime Minister Shehbaz Sharif's recent tour of Turkey, Iran, Azerbaijan and Tajikistan, Dar thanked those countries for their support following the 22 April Pahalgam terror attack that killed 26 people. *—PTI*

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Man held for raping toddler in Uttar Pradesh

BANDA, 4 JUNE

Police in Uttar Pradesh's Banda district have arrested a 24-year-old man for allegedly raping a three-year-old girl,. child was reported missing on Tuesday afternoon, prompting a search. She was later found injured in a nearby forest and rushed to a government hospital.

Banda Superintendent of Police Palash Bansal said several suspects were detained for questioning. It emerged that a local youth, living near the victim's home, had taken the child into the forest and allegedly assaulted her.

During a night search of the area, police confronted the accused. He was arrested around 2am on Wednesday after a brief encounter with police and sustained a gunshot wound to the leg. Legal proceedings are ongoing. *—PTI*

PHOTO: ANI

POCSO accused can't attend Kerala school events

T'VANANTHAPURAM, 4 JUNE

Kerala's General Education Minister V Sivankutty on Wednesday stressed that no person accused under the POCSO Act should be allowed to attend events in state-run schools. His remarks follow an incident where a POCSO-accused vlogger participated in a reopening ceremony at a government school in Thiruvananthapuram. Sivankutty called it a serious lapse, stating the school and staff could not claim ignorance. The headmistress informed him a voluntary organisation, which donates textbooks, had invited the individual. The minister made it clear that such people must not be part of school functions. The Education Department has ordered a probe into the incident, which occurred on Monday. *—PTI*

1 dead, 70 ill after food poisoning at Telangana hospital

HYDERABAD, 4 JUNE

One person died and around 70 others fell ill with vomiting and diarrhoea at the Telangana government's Institute of Mental Health (IMH) in Hyderabad on Tuesday. The patient who died was found unresponsive and, despite CPR efforts, was declared dead at Osmania General Hospital (OGH). Two other patients with low blood pressure were admitted to OGH but are in stable condition. The rest remain under observation at IMH. District Collector Anudeep Durishetty said water samples from the hospital's source showed no issues, but tests on the water distribution network are pending. Stool and vomit samples are being analysed to determine if food poisoning caused the illness, as food samples were unavailable. An alternative water supply has been arranged. *—PTI*

Odisha cops find 1T explosives stolen by Maoists

BHUBANESWAR, 4 JUNE

Nearly one tonne of explosives stolen by Maoists near a stone quarry in Odisha's Sundergarh district has been recovered. Security forces from Odisha Police, CRPF, Jharkhand Jaguar, the Special Operations Group, and the elite COBRA unit launched a joint operation in Jharkhand's Saranda Forest after Maoists stole about four tonnes of explosives, mainly gelatin on 27 May.1,000kg of explosives were recovered on 3 June adding to 2.5 tonnes found on 2 June and 157kg earlier. The explosives were buried in dense jungle. A group of 25-30 Maoists hijacked a truck carrying explosives to the Banko stone quarry. The police arrested the warehouse owner, Sraban Agarwal and the truck driver.*—PTI*

CJI flays former judges joining politics

Calls it attempt to gain govt's favour; govt calls parties to meet on Judge Varma's removal

NEW DELHI, 4 JUNE

Chief Justice of India BR Gavai has said instances of corruption and misconduct in the judiciary have a negative impact on public confidence, eroding faith in the integrity of the system.

Speaking at a roundtable conference in the Supreme Court of the United Kingdom on 'Maintaining Judicial Legitimacy and Public Confidence', he spoke about post-retirement jobs of judges, and said if a judge takes up another appointment with the government immediately after retirement, or resigns to contest elections, it raises "significant ethical concerns and invites public scrutiny".

The Supreme Court has consistently taken immediate and appropriate measures to address corruption and misconduct.

His remarks come in the backdrop of Allahabad High Court's Justice Yashwant Varma facing allegations of corruption after the discovery of a large amount of cash from his official residence in Delhi.

The judiciary must not only dispense justice, but also be seen as an institution that deserves to hold truth to power as "judicial legitimacy" and "public confidence" are interconnected.

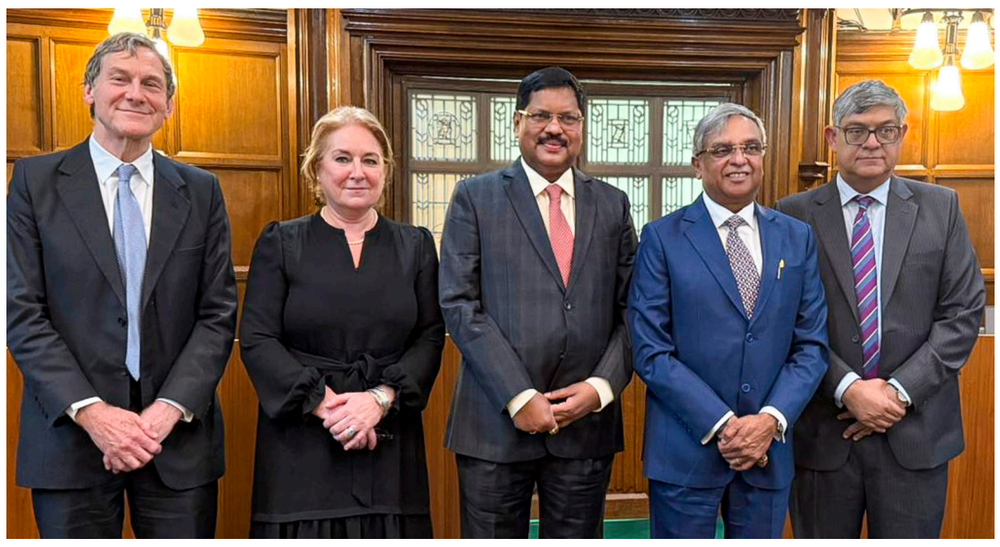
The judiciary must be accessible, intelligible, and answerable, without compromising its independence.

CJI Gavai said the voluntary disclosure of assets by the judges of the Supreme Court promote greater accountability, setting an example of ethical leadership.

The Supreme Court also initiated live-streaming of its Constitution-bench cases.

Meanwhile, Union Parliamentary Affairs Minister Kiren Rijiju on Wednesday underlined the government's resolve to take all political parties on board in moving an impeachment motion against Justice Yashwant Varma, saying judicial corruptiom cannot be approached through a "political prism".

Rijiju initiated discussions with political parties to bring the motion in Parliament's Monsoon session, starting from 21 July. *– PTI*



Chief Justice of India BR Gavai with others during a conference at the Supreme Court of the United Kingdom, in London, on Wednesday *PHOTO: PTI*

Bhopal gas tragedy: SC refuses to hear plea against waste disposal

NEW DELHI, 4 JUNE

The Supreme Court on Wednesday refused to urgently hear a plea against the incineration of hazardous waste of the 1984 Bhopal gas tragedy, which claimed 5,479 lives and maimed more than five lakh.

The Madhya Pradesh High Court had ordered the disposing of the toxic waste in Pithampur area in Bhopal's Dhar district.

The matter would be heard after July.

The petitioner sought a stay on the order asking for incineration of 377 tonnes of waste. *—PTI*

Apex court to hear plea by scribes alleging assault by MP police

The Supreme Court on Wednesday sought response from the Madhya Pradesh government on a plea filed by two journalists, who have alleged that they were beaten up in a police station for reporting on sand mafia.

A bench of Justices Sanjay Karol and Satish Chandra Sharma agreed to hear the plea filed by journalists Shashikant Goyal and Amarkant Singh Chouhan, and issued notice to Madhya Pradesh seeking its response.

The counsel appearing for the petitioners urged the bench that interim protection from arrest be granted to the petitioners. The bench will hear it on 9 June. *—PTI*

Relief for family as Indians missing in Iran traced

HOSHIARPUR, 4 JUNE

The family of Amritpal Singh, who went missing in Iran are cautiously optimistic after the Iranian embassy in India said that he was found and released by the police in Tehran.

Someone identifying as Amritpal, called the family, saying he was free and needed money. However, they delayed celebrations till there was visual confirmation of his safety.

Amritpal, 23, from Bhagowal village in Punjab's Hoshiarpur, Husanpreet Singh of Dhuri in Sangrur and Jaspal Singh of Langroya in SBS Nagar went missing in Iran in May.

They had left for Australia on 1 May for jobs there, but found themselves in Iran, where they were "kidnapped."

Amritpal had been working at a factory after completing Class 12. His family paid Rs 18 lakh to travel agents, Dheeraj Atwal and Kamal Atwal for a work visa and job in Australia.

The kidnappers demanded Rs 1.5 crore for their release, later reducing it to Rs 54 lakhs.

The Iranian embassy in New Delhi Tehran said that all three Indians nationals had been rescued.

The Ministry of External Affairs (MEA) was also touch with the Iranian authorities.

Amritpal's family, currently residing in Bure Jattan, was overwhelmed by well-wishers and neighbours, coming to offer their congratulations.

"Until we see and talk to him, we cannot celebrate with certainty," Yudhveer Singh, Amritpal's cousin said, urging the Iranian authorities to facilitate a video interaction.

The family also received video calls from unknown numbers, showing the three youths tied up with injury marks.

Punjab Police registered cases against the agents, who are currently absconding. *– PTI*

Amritpal Singh went missing in Iran recently *PHOTO: ANI*

PRISON CELL TURNS CAFE

A 140-year-old building in Meghalaya, which used to house a police station, is now a cafe. The Sohra 1885 cafe lets people dine in a prison cell. *PHOTO: PTI*

Rains batter North East; many rescued in Sikkim

ITANAGAR, 4 JUNE

The flood situation in Arunachal Pradesh remained grim on Wednesday with incessant rain causing fresh landslides and floods and affecting over 3,000 people in 23 districts.

At least 12 people have died this year, while search operations are underway for two missing persons.

ASSAM SITUATION GRIM: The flood situation in Assam also remained very critical on Wednesday, as continuous rain led to a rise in water levels in many parts of the state and inundation in new areas, officials said.

Seven rivers, including the Brahmaputra, were flowing above the danger level, even as the Regional Meteorological Centre (RMC) in Guwahati predicted heavy to very heavy rainfall at isolated places in the state.

TOURISTS RESCUED: Meanwhile, Army personnel established a walkway to north Sikkim's Lachen village, which remained completely cut off due to multiple landslides triggered by heavy rain in Mangan district, and reached out to 113 stranded tourists there, an official statement said on Wednesday. The tourists stuck in the village for the last few days will be evacuated soon, the statement added. *– PTI*

Rescued tourists in an Indian Air Force helicopter in Mangan district, Sikkim *PHOTO: PTI*

5 die at Odisha govt hospital; probe ordered

KORAPUT, 4 JUNE

An investigation has been ordered after five patients died at the state-run Saheed Laxman Nayak Medical College and Hospital (SLNMCH) in Koraput, Odisha, amid allegations of medical negligence. The deceased included two men and three women who died on Tuesday night. Families claimed they were given injections, after which they died.

SLNMCH's superintendent, Susanta Kumar Sahu, said a departmental inquiry has been initiated. "We have called a meeting of all departmental heads. The patients who died were admitted in critical condition. We will investigate the allegations."

Three patients died in the ICU, while two others died in the general ward. The families protested outside the hospital, prompting police deployment to maintain order. *—PTI*

Weapon used to kill MP tourist in M'laya found

SHILLONG, 4 JUNE

Police have recovered a bloodstained machete believed to be the murder weapon in the case of Raja Raghuvanshi, who went missing with his wife during their honeymoon in Meghalaya, officials said on Wednesday.

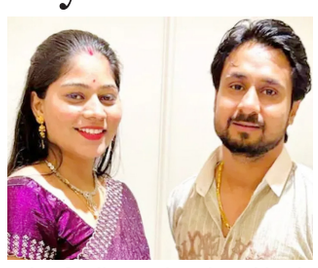
A raincoat thought to belong to the couple from Madhya Pradesh was found in Mawkma village, near the gorge where Raja's body was discovered on Monday.

"We recovered a relatively unused, bloodstained machete during the search yesterday. The raincoat was found today," said East Khasi Hills SP Vivek Syiem.

Mawkma lies between the site where Raja's decomposed body was found and Sohra, where the couple's abandoned scooter was located.

Searches for Raja's wife, Sonam, continue under the National Disaster Response Force, employing drones, sniffer dogs and mountaineers. The raincoat may provide further clues.

The couple had arrived in Mawlakhiat village on 22 May on a rented scooter. They trekked down over 3,000 steps to the living root bridges in Nongriat village and stayed overnight. Their scooter was found abandoned near a café on the Shillong-Sohra road on 24 May. Raja's family suspects murder, as his gold rings, chain and wallet were missing. *—PTI*



Raja's family members have identified the body after they spotted a tattoo on his right hand. His wife Sonam is still missing *PHOTO: ANI*

People gather at the accident site after a truck carrying cement overturned on a van killing at least nine members of a family *PHOTO: PTI*

9 KILLED, 2 INJURED IN ACCIDENT IN MP

JHABUA, 4 JUNE

Nine people, including five minors, died and two others were injured when a cement-laden trailer truck overturned on a van in Jhabua district, Madhya Pradesh, on Wednesday.

The victims were returning from a wedding at Bhavpura to their native Shivgarh Mahuda village when the accident occurred around 2.30am.

The trailer was crossing an under-construction rail overbridge when it lost balance and overturned onto the van. The deceased belonged to two families.

The deceased are Mukesh Khaped, 40; Savli Khaped, 35; Vinod Khaped, 16; Payal Khaped,12; Madhi Bamania,38; Vijay Bamania,14; Kanta Bamania, 14; Ragini, 9, and Akli Parmar, 35. Their bodies were sent for post-mortem. The two injured were admitted to a hospital. The truck driver fled, and police have booked a case. *—PTI*

IN KAZIRANGA

SC ban fails to curb illegal mining

NEW DELHI, 4 JUNE

The Central Empowered Committee (CEC) has told the Supreme Court that illegal mining has intensified in Assam's Parkup Pahar area near the Kaziranga National Park, despite the top court order banning all mining and related activities in and around the park's eco-sensitive zone.

Kazirangais home to around 65 per cent of the endangered one-horned rhino population globall. It forms part of an important wildlife corridor between the Brahmaputra floodplains and the Karbi Anglong hills. The Supreme Court in 2019 prohibited all mining in this region.

Based on an anonymous Assam government employee's complaint and field verification, the CEC submitted a fresh report to the SC, saying that mining activities in the region have "continued and intensified" despite the ban.

The government employee had submitted Google Earth imagery showing mining resumed and intensified after 2021.

The principal chief conservator of forests, Assam, submitted a detailed report, outlining the actions taken, including suspension of mining leases.

It confirmed that stone mining occurred near the Borjuri Waterfall and its surrounding streams flowing towards Kaziranga.

The Karbi Anglong Autonomous Council (KAAC) gave fresh permissions for "dozens" of mines in forest areas and in proposed eco-sensitive zones, without approval from the standing committee of the National Board for Wildlife and the Central government.

Immediate halt to mining and related activities in the Parkup Pahar and the forested catchments were recommended. No new lease should be granted.

The Assam government may approach the Gauhati High Court to seek review of its recent orders allowing mining in some cases. *—PTI*

A one-horned rhinoceros inside the Kaziranga National Park in Nagaon district of Assam *PHOTO: PTI*

2025 IPL: From final frontier to decline of champions

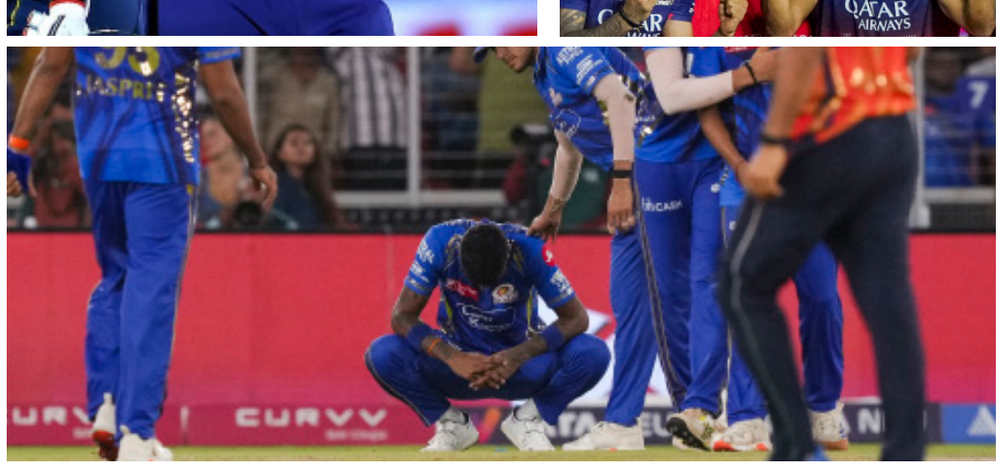
Virat Kohli's Royal Challengers Bengaluru conquered their final frontier but Shreyas Iyer's resurgent Punjab Kings tripped on the last lap. Mercurial Mumbai Indians once again dazzled before rolling over, and Shubman Gill's Gujarat Titans succumbed when it came to winning those big moments.

The 18th edition of the IPL, played over four months from late March to a few days into June, concluded with a fitting finale on Tuesday which saw years of toil and disappointment culminating in such an overwhelming end for RCB that it left their old warhorse in Kohli bursting out in emotions.

In all, IPL's 74 matches this year took as many days to culminate in a sweet triumph for one team but left the rest nine with a lot of catching up to do when they come around for the 2026 edition.

Here's a recap of cricket's most followed league's 18th season.

Royal Challengers Bengaluru's player Virat Kohli poses with the trophy after winning the Indian Premier League (IPL) 2025, in Ahmedabad, Gujarat, Wednesday **PHOTO: PTI**



Kohli's happy tears as RCB rejoice:
The superstar failed to get going in the big final as his conservative 35-ball 43 with only three fours left RCB wanting. Luck seemed to be deserting Kohli's men as none of them could convert starts.

But if, at the halfway mark, Punjab looked ahead, everything fell in place for RCB in final analysis. RCB put together an impeccable squad in the mega auction and fired in unison one last time this year to deliver a win which will be remembered for a long time.

Until any player in future who bats as well as Kohli and spends as much time in the same franchise as the superstar has, the record of most runs by any player in IPL for a single team will remain with Kohli and RCB. That also includes crossing the 600-run mark, which Kohli has done five times including this year with 657 runs.

Punjab Kings' rise:
Shreyas Iyer's with 604 runs with six 50s, average 50.33 performances in the last one year or so have been screaming out loud that there is more to him than what is perceived both as a batter and a leader. It was no surprise to see that he was the anchor of the perennial strugglers' remarkable turnaround. A title win was not meant to be, but Punjab ensured they will now be considered among title challengers in the IPL.

Mumbai Indians do a Mumbai Indians:
Four defeats in first five games marked yet another typical Mumbai Indians' start, but Hardik Pandya's men came back roaring to win the next six matches. Suryakumar Yadav crossed the 700-run mark for the first time for a MI batter.

Gill's Titans lose steam:
Sai Sudharsan, Shubman Gill, Jos Buttler and Prasidh Krishna shone brightest as Titans dominated the league stage but lost steam towards the business end.

Young guns make a strong dent:
RR's Vaibhav Suryavanshi was a 13-year-old when he was picked in the mega auction and at 14 in May, he became the youngest ever to score the fastest IPL ton for an Indian off 35 balls and second fastest ever, against Gujarat Titans.

Daunting SRH misfire:
Last year's runner-up SRH came in with one of the most intimidating batting line-ups but the all-out attack approach fell flat on its face. SRH began with the second highest total ever of 286/6 against RR and ended with the third highest, of 278/3 against KKR. In between, it looked like SRH never had a Plan B with bat.

CSK learn it the hard way:
Change is the only constant goes the old adage and CSK learnt it the hard way. CSK parted ways with its philosophy of keeping young talent on bench but it was too little too late as Dhoni's men found themselves out of contention pretty early in the league.

High-flying DC nosedive:
The Capitals began looking like they wouldn't put a foot wrong but when it came to being clinical and consistent, the fight petered out. DC began with five wins in first six matches and were perched at the top of table, but a stunning nosedive saw them lose five out of the next eight. —*PTI*

SALAR

South Korea: What can be expected from new Prez?

Images from the election of South Korea's new president, liberal Lee Jae-myung, are everything you'd expect to see in one of the world's most vibrant democracies.

Peaceful. Orderly. And, because this is South Korea, compulsively eye-catching, with crowds singing raucously along to blaring K-pop, dancers bouncing in closely choreographed sequences, and colour-coordinated outfits for the two front-runners and their supporters — blue for Lee, who was inaugurated Wednesday for a single, five-year term, red for the distant runner-up, conservative Kim Moon Soo.

What the pictures don't capture is the absolute turmoil of the past six months, making Tuesday one of the strangest — and, possibly, most momentous -- election days since the country emerged in the late 1980s from decades of dictatorship.

Since 3 December, South Koreans have watched, stunned, as an extraordinary sequence of events unfolded: Then-South Korean President Yoon Suk Yeol declared martial law, a first since the dictatorship.

In response, lawmakers, leaping fences and jostling with heavily armed soldiers, elbowed their way into a besieged parliament to vote the declaration down. Yoon was then impeached and removed from office and now, just two months after his fall, another president has taken office.

Here is a look at Lee's victory, the startling events that set up the election, and the challenges Lee faces to heal a nation split along a host of political and social fault lines.

They are, in a way, older than the nation. The Korean Peninsula was initially divided into a Soviet-backed north and US-backed south after World War II. The states formalised the division in 1948, and the 1950-53 Korean War made it permanent, dividing the rivals along the Demilitarised Zone, one of the most heavily armed borders in the world.

But the tensions go beyond geography. During the long fight for democracy during South Korea's dictatorships, several fractures arose that persist today: the contentions between liberals and conservatives, but also gaps between rich and poor, old and young and men and women.

Since the end of dictatorship, over and over the country has seen its democracy tested.

By its own leaders. By its antagonistic neighbour to the north.

By each new generation's reaction to a tumultuous history of forced geographic division, war, dictatorship, and one of the most breakneck economic turnarounds in world history.

Preceding Tuesday's election, thousands of protesters took to the streets, both supporting the deposed Yoon and denouncing him.

"Above all, the president must bring unity among a divided and confused public, which was caused by the martial law declaration," Park Soo Hyun, a 22-year-old student, said Wednesday.

Lee's party has a majority in parliament that will presumably allow the new president a freer hand in pushing through liberal legislation, including more funding for welfare programs and policies to address high living costs, joblessness and corruption.

Typically, liberals like Lee have been more wary of South Korea's traditional allies, the United States and Japan, than conservatives. They have also often looked for reconciliation with North Korea.

US sees South Korea as a crucial buttress against China and Russia and North Korea's growing nuclear capabilities. The South hosts nearly 30,000 US troops.

Lee, however, will have to find a way to keep his liberal base happy while managing the relationship with US President Donald Trump, who has threatened Seoul with tariffs and has generally been lukewarm about the importance of the alliance.

Lee has also been dogged by a raft of corruption cases, and it's not yet clear how much of a drag those will be on his presidency.

"I will make sure there is no more military coup d'état, in which the power entrusted by the people would never be used to intimidate people," Lee said in his victory speech early Wednesday morning, referring to the martial law decree.

Experts say it's a little of both. The last half-year has worsened already raw divisions, even as it highlighted the underlying strength of a rough-and-tumble democratic process.

"Fierce ideological divisions still infuse politics, which could impede South Korea's chances to grow into a truly mature democracy," Duyeon Kim, a visiting professor at Yonsei University in Seoul, wrote recently for the Council on Foreign Relations.

But Tuesday's vote and Wednesday's inauguration signalled a return to a more normal democracy.

And even the crisis itself showed the resiliency of South Korea's institutions.

A crowd helped lawmakers get past troops and into parliament to overturn the martial law decree. The soldiers who carried out Yoon's orders did so without enthusiasm and didn't use force against the people, John Delury, a Korea expert and visiting professor at John Cabot University, said Tuesday.

Korean democracy is in the people's hands, he said, not any one person's, even the new President's. —*PTI*

Lee Jae-myung, the presidential candidate for South Korea's Democratic Party **PHOTO: FREEPIK**

LETTERS write to us at salarenglishdigital@gmail.com

Here's what to know about this year's Hajj pilgrimage

Muslims from around the world are in the Saudi city of Mecca for the Hajj, one of the Five Pillars of Islam.

In the coming days, people will immerse themselves in religious rituals and acts of worship that originated more than 1,400 years ago.

They also have to contend with excess heat and other earthly factors, like a ban on children under the age of 12 and a crackdown on unauthorised entry.

Here's what to know about this year's Hajj:

Last year's pilgrims struggled through burning sun and suffocating hot weather, with the mercury hitting 47 degrees Celsius. More than 1,300 people died.

This year, Saudi authorities are advising caution in direct sunlight, telling pilgrims to avoid going out during the day and uncovering their heads, except for rituals, unless necessary.

An official safety kit emphasizes the importance of light-coloured clothing and umbrellas. It also has details on recognising and treating the symptoms of dehydration and heat exhaustion.

But it is tough to avoid the heat and crowds when the Hajj is outdoors. It is a once-in-a-lifetime opportunity for many, elevating the personal stakes further, and temperatures in Mecca are already 41 degrees Celsius.

Although the desert kingdom spends billions of dollars on crowd control and cooling, the volume of pilgrims and climatic conditions make it difficult to guarantee people's safety.

Saudi Arabia has banned children under 12 from this year's Hajj — one of the biggest policy changes in recent years.

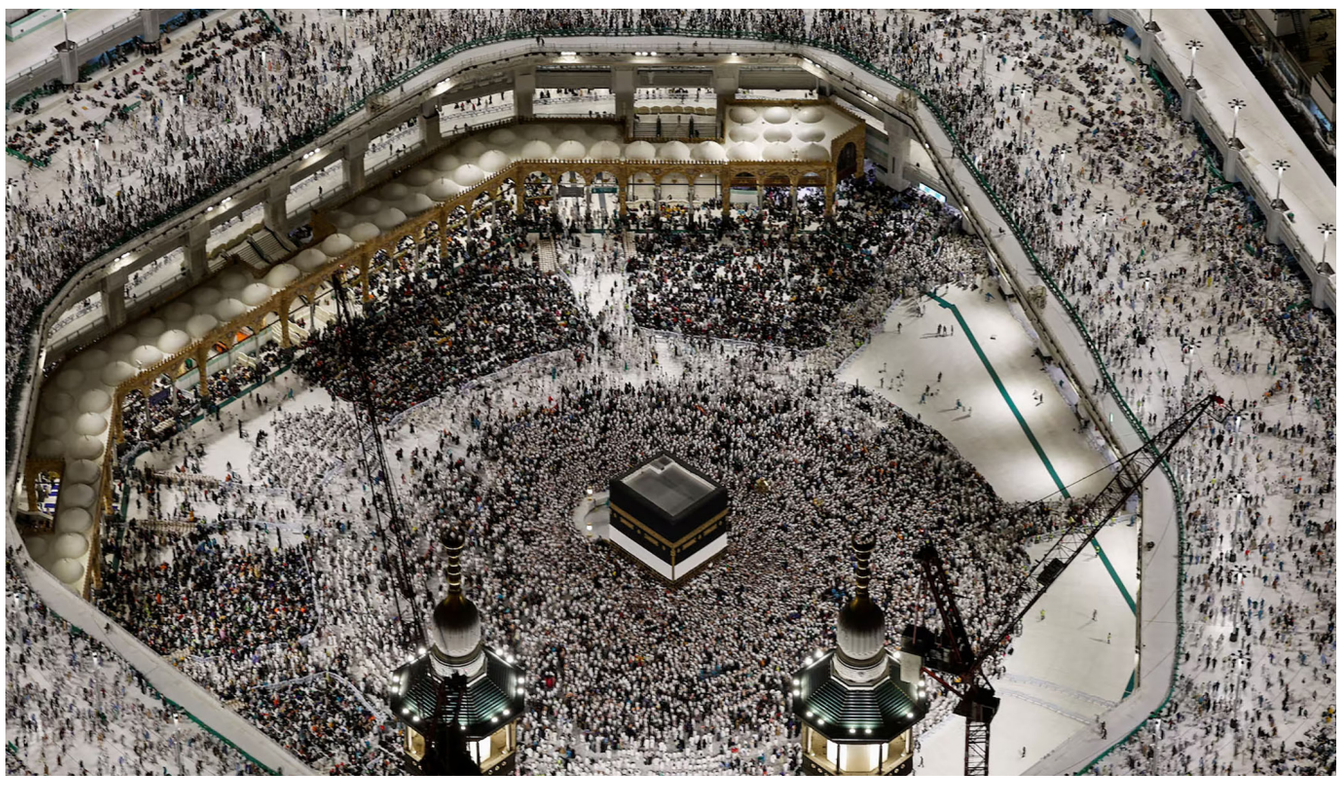
Riyadh reportedly introduced the ban as a precautionary measure to ensure children's safety during the pilgrimage, which could be a dangerous environment for them because of the huge crowds.

Children are exempt from doing the Hajj and are not required to fulfill other Islamic obligations, like prayer and fasting, until they reach puberty.

But that does not stop some parents from wanting to take their children to experience the Hajj and see the holiest site in Islam, the Kaaba, the black, cube-shaped structure that is the focal point for daily prayers.

There is no official age breakdown for pilgrims, but most are between 35 and 64.

The price of a Hajj ranges from USD 4,000 to USD 20,000, depending on the length of the stay, level of comfort, and country of departure. Depreciating currencies, high inflation, and tax hikes in Saudi Arabia also have an impact on how much Muslims end up paying.



Children are exempt from doing the Hajj and are not required to fulfill other Islamic obligations, like prayer and fasting, until they reach puberty **PHOTO: FREEPIK**

The countries that typically send the most pilgrims are developing nations. Some have trimmed the price of government-backed Hajj programs to make them more affordable. But this step is not always enough.

Farid Ahmed Majumder, Secretary General of the Hajj Agencies Association of Bangladesh, said the country was allowed to send some 1,27,000 pilgrims this year but failed to meet this quota, mainly because of higher costs.

Pakistan has reduced the price of the state-run Hajj programme. It has also debuted a flexible payment system.

Farmer and small business owner Zaheer Ahmad said he did not have enough money to pay for his Hajj upfront, 1.2 million rupees or about USD 4,255.

In Saudi Arabia, which has also introduced flexible payments, domestic pilgrims pay 20 per cent within 72 hours of booking, another 40 per cent during Ramadan and the final 40 per cent the following month.

Managing wait times and overcrowding.

Although the Hajj is a once-in-a-lifetime obligation, people do not want to wait a lifetime to fulfill it.

But the Hajj has limited capacity, countries have set quotas, and there is only one time each year to do it. Patience really is a virtue and everything needs to align: availability, health and finances. —PTI

Pak forces kill 14 terrorists near Afghan border

PESHAWAR, 4 JUNE

Fourteen terrorists were killed in an intelligence-based operation by Pakistani security forces in Datta Khel, North Waziristan, near the Afghan border, the military's media wing confirmed on Wednesday. According to the Inter-Services Public Relations (ISPR), the operation was launched between June 2 and 3 following intelligence about the presence of militants in the area. Troops raided a hideout and, after an intense exchange of fire, "14 khwarij were sent to hell," the statement said, using a derogatory term for extremists. Sanitisation operations are ongoing to clear the area of any remaining threats. The ISPR reaffirmed the military's resolve to eradicate "sponsored terrorism" and restore peace across Pakistan. *—PTI*

Poland's PM Tusk to face confidence vote

WARSAW, 4 JUNE

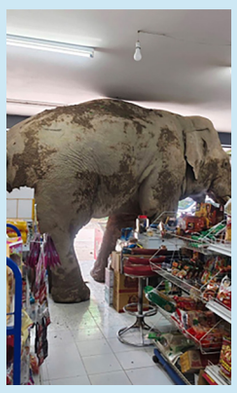
Polish Prime Minister Donald Tusk announced a confidence vote in Parliament scheduled for 11 June, following the election of conservative Karol Nawrocki as president. Nawrocki narrowly defeated Tusk's ally, liberal Warsaw Mayor Rafal Trzaskowski, with 50.89 per cent of the vote. Tusk acknowledged the new political reality but stressed that the constitution and citizens' expectations remain unchanged. While the government handles daily affairs, the president holds veto power and influences foreign policy, complicating Tusk's pro-European agenda. Tusk's coalition, spanning left-wing progressives to agrarian conservatives, remains fragile but likely to survive the vote. Nawrocki, supported by former US President Donald Trump, takes office on 6 August. *—PTI*

NY 'social media prankster' arrested for dumping food

NEW YORK, 4 JUNE

A 21-year-old TikTok content creator, Kyle Vazquez, was arrested in Centereach, Long Island, for viral pranks involving dumping food on himself at local businesses and filming people without consent. Vazquez, who has over 1,00,000 TikTok followers, faces eight charges — six for unlawful recording and two for criminal tampering. On 29 April, he dumped a tub of eggs on his head at Ralph's Italian Ices before fleeing. The next day, he poured a bucket of beans over himself at a Chinese restaurant. In May, he visited three homes under the pretext of using the bathroom and caused disturbances while filming residents without permission. He pleaded not guilty and was released ahead of his 30 June court date. *—PTI*

Jumbo raids Thai store for snacks



A hungry wild elephant named Plai Biang Lek caused chaos in a grocery store near Khao Yai National Park, Thailand, on Monday. The elephant calmly entered, snatched snacks at the counter, ignored attempts to shoo him away, and left carrying a bag of food, leaving only mud tracks behind **PHOTO: PTI**

Lee Jae-myung sworn in as South Korea's President

Vows to pursue talks with North, bolster ties with US & Japan

SEOUL, 4 JUNE

South Korea's new President Lee Jae-myung took office on Wednesday, pledging to reopen dialogue with North Korea while reinforcing security ties with the US and Japan. Lee, who won a snap election after the ousting of former President Yoon Suk Yeol in April over his failed martial law declaration, assumed office immediately for a single five-year term.

In his inaugural speech, Lee called for "strong deterrence" against North Korean threats, based on the South Korea-US alliance. At the same time, he vowed to "open a communication channel" with the North to restore peace through dialogue and cooperation.

He also emphasised "pragmatic diplomacy" and vowed to boost trilateral ties with Washington and Tokyo. The US and Japan welcomed his election, with Japanese PM Shigeru Ishiba seeking early summit talks.

South Korea`s Democratic Party`s Presidential candidate Lee Jae-myung at National Assembly in Seoul **PHOTO: PTI**

While Lee has faced past criticism for perceived pro-China and pro-North Korea leanings, he has recently affirmed the US alliance as central to South Korea's foreign policy. Analysts say the challenges of office may push him toward centrist policies, especially amid trade tensions with the US and growing North Korea-Russia ties.

To support his outreach efforts, Lee appointed pro-engagement former unification minister Lee Jong-seok as spy chief, and named key ally Kim Min-seok as prime minister.

Lee also vowed to address domestic economic and political challenges. He promised aggressive stimulus measures to combat recession risks, following the central bank's growth downgrade to 0.8% for 2025.

He pledged to reduce inequality, tackle regional imbalances, and lead an emergency economic task force. On the political front, Lee urged unity after Yoon's controversial martial law, promising a thorough investigation into the former president's actions.

Lee, who faces multiple trials, is protected by presidential immunity during his term. His presidency began with a visit to the national cemetery and a call to military leaders for heightened defence readiness. *—PTI*

Russia's top security official, Sergei Shoigu, visited North Korea on Wednesday for talks with leader Kim Jong Un **PHOTO: X**

RUSSIA-N KOREA DEEPEN TIES AS UKRAINE BACKERS HOLD MEET

BRUSSELS/MOSCOW, 4 JUNE

Russia's top security official, Sergei Shoigu, visited North Korea on Wednesday for talks with leader Kim Jong Un, signalling deepening cooperation between Moscow and Pyongyang amid Russia's war in Ukraine.

The Tass news agency reported that discussions included the strategic partnership signed in June 2024 and global issues, particularly Ukraine. Shoigu, now Russia's Security Council Secretary and formerly defence minister, last visited Pyongyang in March.

The meeting follows Kremlin confirmation in April that North Korean troops are fighting alongside Russian forces in Russia's Kursk region. President Vladimir Putin praised them for defending Russia "as their own". Meanwhile in Brussels, senior officials from nearly 50 nations convened for the Ukraine Defence Contact Group meeting, seeking to boost arms and ammunition supplies to Kyiv. Notably absent was US Defence Secretary Pete Hegseth — the first such absence since the group's inception in 2022. The UK and Germany chaired the session. *—PTI*

LEGISLATION AMENDED

Mujib is no longer 'Father of B'desh'

DHAKA, 4 JUNE

Bangladesh's interim government has amended a legislation thereby dropping the "Father of the Nation" title for Bangabandhu Sheikh Mujibur Rahman and revising the definition of freedom fighter, according to media reports on Wednesday.

The move on Tuesday comes a few days after the Muhammad Yunus-led government dropped the portrait of the country's founding father and deposed prime minister Sheikh Hasina's father Mujibur Rahman from new currency notes. The interim government has amended the National Freedom Fighters Council Act, "altering" the definition of freedom fighter, The Dhaka Tribune newspaper reported.

The Ministry of Law, Justice and Parliamentary Affairs issued the related ordinance on Tuesday night, it said. The amendment to the law also "modifies the term 'Father of the Nation Bangabandhu Sheikh Mujibur Rahman'", the report said.

According to the revised ordinance, all MNAs (Members of the National Assembly) and MPAs (Members of the Provincial Assembly) associated with the wartime government-in-exile of Bangladesh (Mujibnagar Government),

who were later considered members of the erstwhile Constituent Assembly, will now be categorised as "associates of the Liberation War", the Dhaka Tribune reported. Until now, they were recognised as freedom fighters. As per the amendment, all civilian individuals who, between 26 March and 16 December, 1971, received combat training or made preparations for war within the country, enrolled in training camps in India, in the pursuit of Bangladesh's independence, will be recognised as freedom fighters. *—PTI*

Musk calls Trump's spending bill a 'disgusting abomination'

WASHINGTON, 4 JUNE

Elon Musk has harshly criticised President Donald Trump's "big, beautiful bill" of tax breaks and spending cuts, calling it a "disgusting abomination" on Tuesday. Musk's comments, posted on his social media platform X, mark a stark departure from his previous support for Trump, whom he helped during the last election with at least $250 million.

"This massive, outrageous, pork-filled Congressional spending bill is a disgusting abomination. Shame on those who voted for it: you know you did wrong. You know it," Musk wrote. The legislation, which passed the House narrowly, is now under Senate review and includes cuts scheduled to reduce subsidies benefiting Musk's electric car company, Tesla. Musk also threatened Republican lawmakers: "In November next year, we fire all politicians who betrayed the American people." Despite this tough rhetoric, Musk recently said he plans to spend "a lot less" on political campaigns but left open the possibility of future involvement.

Meanwhile, President Trump is urging the Senate to pass the bill quickly, aiming to have it signed into law by the Fourth of July. Trump met with Senate Majority Leader John Thune and has been personally calling senators to push for swift action. The 1,000-page bill, passed by the House by just one vote, is undergoing revisions in the Senate, where support remains uncertain. Trump called the legislation "a Historic Opportunity to turn our Country around" and urged senators to "work as fast as they can to get this Bill to MY DESK before the Fourth of JULY." *—PTI*

Iran flays US nuke proposal

Iran's supreme leader on Wednesday criticised an initial proposal from the United States in negotiations over Tehran's rapidly advancing nuclear programme, though he stopped short of entirely rejecting the idea of agreement with Washington. The remarks by Ayatollah Ali Khamenei coloured in the red line expressed over recent days — one that says Tehran refuses to give up enriching uranium in any possible deal with the US. That demand has been repeatedly made by American officials, including President Donald Trump, though it remains unclear

No emergency abortion in US

The Trump administration has revoked a Biden-era directive requiring hospitals to provide emergency abortions when needed to stabilise a woman's condition. The 2022 guidance was issued under the Emergency Medical Treatment and Active Labor Act, which mandates emergency care in hospitals receiving Medicare funds. Abortion rights advocates condemned the move, warning it endangers women. "Hospitals need more guidance, not less," said Nancy Northup of the Center for Reproductive Rights.

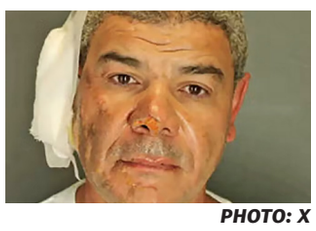


PHOTO: X

KIN OF COLORADO FIRE BOMB SUSPECT DETAINED

BOULDER, 4 JUNE

The wife and five children of an Egyptian man accused of firebombing an event in Colorado in support of Israeli hostages were taken into custody on Tuesday by US immigration officials and threatened with swift deportation.

The family of Mohamed Sabry Soliman, 45, could be deported as early as on Tuesday night, the White House said in a post on X. It's rare that family members of a person accused of a crime are detained and threatened with deportation in this way.

Soliman, disguised as a gardener, had planned to kill all of the roughly 20 participants in Sunday's demonstration and had 18 Molotov cocktails, but he threw just two while yelling "Free Palestine," police said.

Soliman, who federal authorities say has been living in the US illegally, didn't carry out his full plan "because he got scared and had never hurt anyone before," police wrote in an affidavit. *—PTI*

Syria fires two rockets at Israel

DAMASCUS/NEW YORK, 4 JUNE

Israel said two rockets were fired from Syria into the Golan Heights on Tuesday — the first such attack since Syrian President Bashar Assad's fall in December. A newly emerged group, the Mohammed Deif Brigades, claimed responsibility, though its legitimacy remains uncertain.

In response, Israeli forces shelled Syria's Daraa province and conducted airstrikes near Quneitra. Israel warned of a "full response," holding Syria's new Islamist-led government under President Ahmad al-Sharaa accountable. Syria denied involvement and condemned the Israeli retaliation, citing "significant human and material losses."

Smoke rises to the sky following an Israeli strike in Gaza city **PHOTO: PTI**

Meanwhile, the UN Security Council is set to vote Wednesday on a resolution demanding an immediate, permanent Gaza ceasefire and the release of hostages. The US is expected to veto the draft, which also calls for the unrestricted entry of humanitarian aid and restoration of basic services.

The resolution follows mounting concern over Gaza's humanitarian collapse. *—PTI*

AFTER REMOVAL FROM ISI

Imran alleges Munir targeted his wife

LAHORE, 3 JUNE

Former Pakistan Prime Minister Imran Khan has accused Army Chief Gen Asim Munir of targeting his wife, Bushra Bibi, in retaliation for being removed as ISI chief during Khan's premiership.

In a post from jail, Khan claimed Gen Munir sought to approach Bushra through intermediaries after his dismissal. Her refusal, he said, led to her current "vindictive" 14-month incarceration and "inhumane" prison treatment.

Khan said Bushra, a private citizen with no political role, faces baseless charges and repeated arrest. "Even under dictatorship, such targeting of a leader's spouse never occurred," he said, adding that a scheduled prison meeting on 1 June was denied despite court orders. The Pakistan Tehreek-e-Insaf chief blamed the May 9, 2023 attacks on military sites on a "London Plan" designed to dismantle PTI and impose the Sharif-Zardari alliance. *—PTI*

Former PM Imran Khan and Chief Gen Asim Munir **PHOTO: ANI**

FEARS OF 'AGROTERRORISM'

FBI arrests Chinese couple for smuggling toxic fungus into US

WASHINGTON, 4 JUNE

FBI Director Kash Patel confirmed Tuesday the arrest of two Chinese nationals for allegedly smuggling a dangerous biological pathogen into the United States, raising alarms over biosecurity and potential agroterrorism.

Federal prosecutors in Michigan unsealed charges against Jian Yunqing, 33, and Liu Zunyong, 34, both researchers from China. The pair face multiple charges, including conspiracy, visa fraud, false statements, and smuggling a toxic fungus known as Fusarium graminearum.

Authorities allege Liu smuggled the pathogen into the US to conduct unauthorised research at a University of Michigan laboratory where his girlfriend, Jian, was employed. The fungus causes "head blight" in staple crops such as wheat, barley, maize, and rice, resulting in billions of dollars in annual losses worldwide. Beyond agriculture, the fungus poses serious health risks to humans and livestock, potentially causing vomiting, liver damage, and reproductive defects.

Liu was caught in July 2024 at Detroit airport with the pathogen concealed in his backpack. He was subsequently deported to China but admitted during questioning that the material was intended for research at the university.

Investigators found evidence on Liu's phone, including an article titled "Plant-Pathogen Warfare under Changing Climate Conditions", suggesting potential knowledge of the pathogen's weaponisation. FBI analysis of text messages indicated Jian was aware of the smuggling operation and later misled investigators during interviews. The FBI and US Customs and Border Protection led the investigation, with federal officials expressing concerns about espionage, bioterrorism, and unauthorised research activities. Jian, currently in custody, is due to appear in federal court later this week. Her suspected ties to the Chinese government are under scrutiny, as she reportedly received funding to research the same fungus while in China. This case emerges amid heightened US concerns over foreign infiltration and biothreats, particularly involving Chinese nationals. *—Agencies*

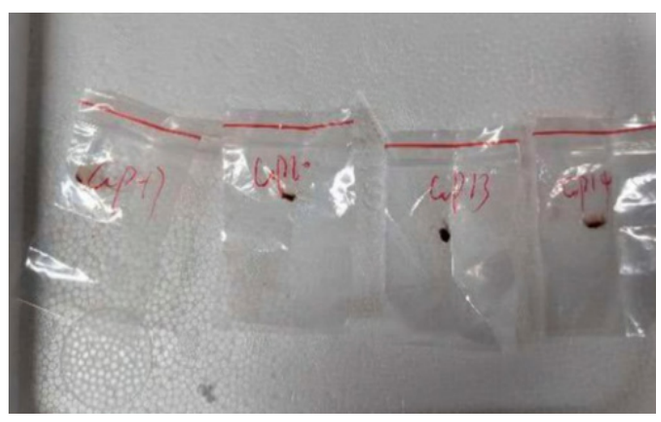


PHOTO: PTI

Gold climbs by Rs 260 to Rs 99,260/10g

NEW DELHI, 4 JUNE

Gold prices climbed Rs 260 to Rs 99,260 per 10g in the national capital on Wednesday amid strong cues in the global markets, according to the All India Sarafa Association. Gold of 99.5 per cent purity rose Rs 100 to Rs 98,700 per 10g (inclusive of all taxes). "Gold showed a slight positive trend on Wednesday due to persistent uncertainties related to trade, along with economic concerns and geopolitical risks, continue to support the safe-haven appeal of the precious metal," Saumil Gandhi, Senior Analyst of Commodities at HDFC Securities, said. On the global front, spot gold went up by USD 9.43 per ounce or 0.28 per cent to USD 3,362.6 per ounce. In April, central banks added a net total of 12 tonnes of gold to global reserves. *—PTI*

Rupee falls by 29P, closes at 85.90 against USD

MUMBAI, 4 JUNE

Rupee depreciated for the second consecutive session and settled for the day lower by 29 paise at 85.90 (provisional) against the US dollar on Wednesday, dragged down by risk-averse sentiments and foreign fund outflows. Forex traders said the local unit remained under pressure on geopolitical tensions between Russia-Ukraine and elevated crude oil prices. Reserve Bank's rate-setting panel started its three-day brainstorming on monetary policy on Wednesday and the outcome is scheduled to be announced on 6 June. At the interbank foreign exchange, the domestic unit opened at 85.69 and moved between high of 85.69 and a low of 86.05 against greenback during the day. The unit closed session at 85.90 (provisional) against dollar. *—PTI*

360 ONE Asset invests Rs 170.6 cr in Paras Healthcare

NEW DELHI, 4 JUNE

360 ONE Asset, a wholly-owned subsidiary of 360 ONE WAM, on Wednesday said it has completed an investment of Rs 170.60 crore in Paras Healthcare, a multi-speciality hospital chain in North India. The transaction includes both primary capital infusion and a secondary component, including a partial exit by an existing investor, the company said in a statement. "We are proud to partner with Paras Healthcare in expanding access to affordable, quality care to underserved customers. This investment is also the latest from our market-leading pre-IPO strategy," Umesh Agrawal, Senior Fund Manager & Strategy Head - Financial Services & Industrials at 360 ONE Asset, said. Paras Healthcare operates more than 2,000 beds across eight hospitals in Tier 1 and Tier 2 cities in North India. *—PTI*

Ganga Bath Fittings IPO open for subscription

NEW DELHI, 4 JUNE

The Rs 33-crore IPO of Ganga Bath Fittings, manufacturer of bathroom accessories, opened for subscription on Wednesday. The IPO priced in the range of Rs 46-49 per equity share, will remain open until 6 June, the company said in a statement. Shares of the company will be listed on NSE Emerge and the investors can bid for a minimum of 3,000 shares and in multiples thereof, it added. The IPO is entirely a fresh issue of 66.63 lakh shares. Proceeds from the IPO will be utilised for capital expenditure, repayment of debt, funding working capital requirements and general corporate purposes. In FY24, the company logged a revenue of Rs 31.89 crore and profit after tax (PAT) of Rs 2.48 crore. *—PTI*

Adani Airports raises $750M

Adani Enterprises gained 0.34% at Rs 2,479.2 on NSE

MUMBAI, 4 JUNE

Adani Enterprises' arm, Adani Airports Holdings Ltd (AAHL), India's biggest private airport operator and a subsidiary of Adani Enterprises Ltd, raised USD 750 million through a consortium of international banks on Tuesday.

A stock exchange filing said that AAHL had raised the funds through external commercial borrowings.

AAHL raised the funds through international banks including First Abu Dhabi Bank, Barclays PLC, and Standard Chartered Bank.

Adani Enterprises marked a gain of 0.34 per cent at Rs 2,479.2 on NSE on Tuesday morning.

The company announced that the funds will be used to refinance the existing debts, boost infrastructure and enhance the capacity of its six airports in Ahmedabad, Lucknow, Mangaluru, Jaipur, Guwahati, and Thiruvananthapuram. A portion of the proceeds will be utilised for the expansion of non-aeronautical businesses such as retail, food and beverage, duty-free outlets and other services across the six airports.

- The company announced that the funds will be used to refinance the existing debts, boost infrastructure and enhance the capacity of its six airports in Ahmedabad, Lucknow, Mangaluru, Jaipur, Guwahati, and Thiruvananthapuram.

The CEO of AAHL Arun Bansal said, "The trust placed in us by leading global financial institutions underscores the long-term value and potential of India's aviation infrastructure. AAHL is well on its path to deliver exceptional customer experiences, leveraging technology for seamless operations, and prioritizing sustainability and community engagement across its airport network."

As its English Law counsels for transactions, the company assigned Latham and Watkins LLP and Linklaters LLP. While Cyril Amarchand Mangaldass and TT&A were assigned as the Indian law counsel.

Additionally, Bansal announced the company's interest in bidding for ground-handling services in Mumbai and Ahmedabad airports.

This decision comes amid the Turkish operator Celebi Hava Servisi AS' revocation of security clearance over its support for Islamabad during the recent India-Pakistan conflict.

Adani Group provides services to around 94 million passengers in the previous fiscal year. Further, the company's upcoming Navi Mumbai International Airport is set to be operational shortly with over 20 million passengers in the first phase extending up to 90 million later. This new airport is said to strengthen the aviation infrastructure in the Mumbai region.

– Agencies

India pushes for WTO action on trade barriers

PARIS, 4 JUNE

India has pushed for comprehensive World Trade Organization (WTO) reforms, calling for decisive action against non-tariff barriers and restoration of the paralysed dispute settlement mechanism during high-level ministerial discussions in Paris.

Commerce and Industry Minister Piyush Goyal outlined India's reform agenda at a mini-ministerial gathering of 25 WTO member countries, emphasising the need to address trade distortions and strengthen multilateral governance ahead of next year's crucial ministerial conference.

Speaking to reporters after the Australia-convened meeting, Goyal articulated India's three-pronged approach to WTO modernisation.

"India made a strong pitch for addressing non-tariff barriers that certain countries use to deprive others of market access, taking necessary action against non-market economies, and ensuring we have a strong dispute settlement mechanism," he said.

He emphasised preserving the WTO's consensus-based decision-making process while maintaining special treatment for developing nations - principles India views as fundamental to the trading system's legitimacy.

India's concerns are central to the WTO's crippled dispute settlement system, which has been effectively non-functional since 2009 due to US opposition to appellate body appointments.

The paralysis has left countries without recourse when trade disputes arise, undermining the organisation's enforcement capacity.

While some members have promoted the Multi-Party Interim Appeal Arbitration Arrangement (MPIA) as an alternative, Goyal expressed scepticism about its effectiveness.

India firmly rejected attempts to expand the WTO's mandate beyond traditional trade issues. Goyal argued that such initiatives would fragment the multilateral system and create new divisions among members.

The discussions addressed several longstanding challenges, including agricultural trade reforms and environmental concerns. *– ANI*

Union Minister Piyush Goyal and others leaders at the WTO Trade Ministers' gathering on the sidelines of the OECD Ministerial Council Meeting, in Paris

PHOTO: ANI

'FDI policy unchanged for neighbours'

NEW DELHI, 4 JUNE

The government has not made any amendments to the foreign direct investment (FDI) policy for countries sharing land border with India, sources said on Wednesday.

In 2020, the government issued Press Note 3 under which investors from these land bordering countries have to mandatorily take prior approval of the government for making investments in any sector.

The Press Note 3 is applicable to all the land bordering countries of India in an equal manner, the sources said. The countries are China, Bangladesh, Pakistan, Bhutan, Nepal, Myanmar and Afghanistan.

All FDI proposals from these nations undergo the similar process of scrutiny and examination as per standard operating procedure for the processing of investment proposals from these nations.

"After issuance of this press note, no amendment has been undertaken in the FDI policy relating to investments from countries sharing land border with India," a source said.

These remarks are important as certain reports have stated that the approval process for FDI applications from China has been streamlined. *– PTI*

Stainless steel demand to grow 7-8%

MUMBAI, 4 JUNE

The demand for stainless steel in the country is expected to grow in the range of 7-8 per cent Y-O-Y over the next three years, the Indian Stainless Steel Development Association (ISSDA) said on Wednesday.

The overall consumption of stainless steel reached 4.8 million tonnes in FY25, registering a Year-On-Year (Y-O-Y) growth of about 8 per cent, ISSDA President Rajamani Krishnamurti said at the Global Stainless-Steel Expo 2025 (GSSE 2025).

Around 10,000 industry leaders, policy makers and experts from India and abroad, as well as government representatives, are attending the event.

"India is likely to retain the highest GDP growth among economies of the world. The stainless steel demand is expected to grow by 7-8 per cent in the next 2-3 years," Krishnamurti told participants at the three-day conference.

Low consumption as against the world average provides a great opportunity to the domestic industry as the government's focus remains on infrastructure development in the country, ISSDA President said.

The government has boosted its capex. On the properties of stainless steel, he said, it is safe for infrastructure projects because of its strength, zero maintenance and life cycle cost, and it is recyclable. *– PTI*

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Indian services growth steadied in May: Survey

NEW DELHI, 4 JUNE

The Indian services growth broadly steadied in May and was underpinned by healthy demand conditions, new client wins and greater staffing capacity, a monthly report said on Wednesday.

The seasonally adjusted HSBC India Services PMI Business Activity Index was at 58.8 in May, marginally up from April's 58.7 and signalled another sharp rate of expansion.

In the Purchasing Managers' Index (PMI) parlance, a print above 50 means expansion, while a score below 50 denotes contraction.

As per the survey, new orders rose at a sharp pace largely driven by advertising, demand strength and repeat orders from existing clients.

Companies also observed a near-record improvement in international demand for their services during May with faster increases in new export orders recorded in Asia, Europe and North America in particular.

Almost 16 per cent of panel members reported higher payroll numbers, while 1 per cent indicated a fall.

The increase in workforce numbers, coupled with overtime payments, added to firms' cost burdens. *– PTI*

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REALTY UNDERPERFORMS

Markets rebound after 3-day decline

MUMBAI, 4 JUNE

Benchmark stock indices Sensex and Nifty ended higher on Wednesday after three days of decline, tracking a rally in global markets.

Buying in blue-chips Reliance Industries and HDFC Bank also added optimism to markets recovery.

The 30-share BSE Sensex climbed 260.74 points, or 0.32 per cent, to settle at 80,998.25. During the day, jumped 349.78 points, or 0.43 per cent, to 81,087.29.

The NSE Nifty went up 77.70 points, or 0.32 per cent, to 24,620.20.

From the Sensex firms, Eternal climbed 3.32 per cent. Bharti Airtel, IndusInd Bank, Tech Mahindra, Reliance Industries, Tata Motors, HDFC Bank, Tata Steel and Hindustan Unilever were the other major gainers.

However, Bajaj Finserv, Axis Bank, Tata Consultancy Services, Titan and Larsen & Toubro were among the laggards.

"The domestic market traded in a narrow range with a mildly positive bias, supported by favourable global cues such as strong US job data and signs of easing US-China trade tensions," Vinod Nair, Head of Research, Geojit Investments Ltd, said.

"Mid and small-cap stocks outperformed, driven by better-than-estimated earnings growth and moderation in valuation. Investors are now focused on the RBI policy meeting starting today, with expectations of a rate cut and clarity on the future growth & inflation forecast," Nair said.

Foreign Institutional Investors (FIIs) offloaded equities worth Rs 2,853.83 crore on Tuesday, according to exchange data.

Global oil benchmark Brent crude climbed 0.38 per cent to USD 65.92 a barrel. *– PTI*

Vodafone Idea shares decline by nearly 2%

NEW DELHI, 4 JUNE

Shares of Vodafone Idea declined almost 2 per cent on Wednesday after Ericsson India sold nearly 1 per cent stake in the debt-ridden telco for Rs 428 crore through an open market transaction.

The stock dropped 1.91 per cent to Rs 6.65 on the BSE. At the NSE, it dipped 1.77 per cent to Rs 6.65. According to the bulk deal data available on BSE on Tuesday, Ericsson India offloaded more than 63.37 crore shares, amounting to a 0.9 per cent stake, in Mumbai-based Vodafone Idea.

The shares were offloaded at an average price of Rs 6.76 apiece, taking the transaction value to Rs 428.44 crore. Details of the buyers of Vodafone Idea's shares could not be identified on the exchange. Last week, Vodafone Idea reported narrowing of losses for the March quarter to Rs 7,166.1 crore and its board approved fundraising of up to Rs 20,000 crore. *—PTI*

Flipkart's arm exits ABFRL; sells 6% stake

NEW DELHI, 4 JUNE

Flipkart Investments, an arm of e-commerce firm Flipkart, on Wednesday exited Aditya Birla Fashion and Retail by selling its entire 6 per cent stake in the company through block deals worth Rs 583 crore.

Following the stake sale, shares of Aditya Birla Fashion & Retail (ABFRL) plunged nearly 11 per cent to trade at Rs 76.94 apiece on NSE.

Flipkart Investments is a wholly-owned subsidiary of Flipkart Pvt Ltd (FPL). FPL belongs to the US-based Walmart Group.

As per the block deal, up to 7.31 crore equity shares of ABFRL were sold at a floor price of Rs 79.50 per share. This represents a discount of about 7.6 per cent to ABFRL's closing price of Rs 86 on the NSE on Tuesday, as per the term sheet reviewed by PTI.

Goldman Sachs is the sole book runner for the deal.

The transaction comprises a sale of approximately 7.31 crore shares amounting to around 6 per cent stake in Mumbai-based ABFRL.

At the offer floor price, the total deal size is estimated at Rs 583 crore which is executed via one or more block deals on the NSE and BSE. Flipkart's exit marks a complete divestment of its holdings in ABFRL, which houses brands such as Pantaloons, Van Heusen, and Louis Philippe. *– PTI*

ESSENTIAL SOFTWARE

What is VPN & how to use it safely?

SYDNEY, 4 JUNE

"This video is not available in your location". It is a message familiar to many people trying to watch global content online. But beneath this frustration lies a deeper question – how do we navigate digital borders safely and ethically?

As our digital lives expand, so too does our desire for access. Maybe you want to see the latest streaming shows before they arrive in your country. Or perhaps you need to log into your company's secure intranet while at home or overseas.

Enter the virtual private network (VPN) – a technology that has become as essential as antivirus software for many.

When you use a VPN, your internal traffic is scrambled into unreadable data and routed through a remote server, which also masks your real IP address.

This technique shields your identity, protects your data from snoopers, and tricks websites into thinking you are browsing from another location.

While often marketed as tools for online privacy, VPNs have grown popular for another reason: access.

In most countries using a VPN is completely legal. However, what makes it murky is what one might use it for.

Risks of unsafe VPNs include data leaks, injection of ads or trackers into your browsing, and malware and spyware, especially in free mobile apps that claim to provide a VPN service.

If you are considering a VPN, here are five things to look out for your safety. No-log policy, strong encryption standards, independent audits, kill, jurisdiction. *—PTI*

PHOTO: FREEPIK

PHOTO: X

Former RCB owner Mallya recalls picking Kohli

NEW DELHI, 4 JUNE

Former Royal Challengers Bengaluru owner Vijay Mallya recalled picking a young Virat Kohli 18 seasons ago in the player's auction and said it was remarkable to witness the maestro staying loyal to the franchise, which has finally won a long-awaited IPL trophy. RCB defeated Punjab Kings by six runs in the IPL final in Ahmedabad on Tuesday to end their long wait in the 18th edition of the tournament. "When I founded RCB, I dreamed that the IPL trophy should come to Bengaluru. I had the privilege of picking the legendary King Kohli as a youngster, and, remarkably, he has stayed with RCB for 18 years," Mallya wrote in a post on 'X'.—*PTI*

PHOTO: X

Atkinson doubtful for 1st Test against India

LONDON, 4 JUNE

England fast bowler Gus Atkinson is doubtful for the first Test against India starting June 20 at Leeds due to a hamstring injury, according to a report. India and England will engage in five Test matches over the next couple of months. "Bowler Gus Atkinson is a doubt for the first Test against India later this month because of a right hamstring strain - adding to England's injury concerns among their seamers," a report in the BBC read. The 27-year-old sustained the injury during the one-off Test against Zimbabwe last month, which ruled him out of the just-concluded ODI series against West Indies, which England won 3-0.—*PTI*

PHOTO: X

Danish leads successful Indian campaign

LONDON, 4 JUNE

Chandigarh's Danish Verma led a successful Indian campaign at the US Kids Golf European Championships this week, winning the boys U-13 title at the iconic Royal Musselburgh Golf Club in Scotland. The Indians claimed one gold medal, one silver, two bronze, and another Top-10 finish. Verma was one of numerous Indians to make it to the podium as Nihal Cheema finished runner-up in the boys' 8 years. Ahana Shah, in the girls' 9 years, and Naaysha Sinha were third in the girls' 8 division, and were also among the medalists.—*PTI*

NZ Cricket seeks a new head coach for all formats

WELLINGTON, 4 JUNE

New Zealand Cricket has begun a search for a new head coach to lead the Black Caps in all three formats after ruling out the incumbent Gary Stead, who has been a national coach since 2018. Stead stepped down in April from the white ball formats and said he was considering his future as test coach. NZC hurried its decision when it said on Wednesday it is now looking for one coach to cover all formats. South African Rob Walter, former New Zealand fast bowler Shane Bond, and current assistants Luke Ronchi and Shane Jurgensen are expected to be interviewed.—*PTI*

Shreyas Iyer could be the leader India needs

Shreyas Iyer's IPL season didn't end with the trophy

NEW DELHI, 4 JUNE

He was a Knight in shining armour for Kolkata in 2024 and 2025, and became the King who almost led Punjab to the crown. Shreyas Iyer's IPL season didn't end with the trophy, but he well and truly established himself as the leader that India might need in the not-so-distant future.

Iyer became the third skipper after Mahendra Singh Dhoni and Rohit Sharma to captain an IPL franchise to three finals, and he did it with three different teams in the last five years. That's some range for a player who astoundingly did not make the Indian Test team for the tour of England this month.

KKR let him go last year as they didn't consider his demand for a higher retention fee to be just. Their loss was, needless to say, a massive gain for Punjab Kings. They got an astute captain and a passionate leader of the men in the 30-year-old, who knows a thing or two about handling the highs and lows of a career with grace. The jury is still out on Shubman Gill, who will face a trial by fire as captain in England. But after June 3, 2025, Shreyas Santosh Iyer should be rated as one of the best captains in Indian cricket. There is a Dhoni-like cool quotient, a Virat Kohli-like aggressive streak when the situation demands, and also a "Bindaas Mumbaikar in him just like his illustrious India teammate Rohit. —*PTI*

Shreyas Iyer receives the runner-up cheque after Punjab Kings fell short in the IPL 2025 final vs RCB *PHOTO: PTI*

> It's right up there but still five notches below Test cricket

- Virat Kohli on IPL triumph

> Virat Kohli deserves it more than anyone else

-Rajat Patidar after leading RCB to maiden IPL title

INDONESIA OPEN

Sathish Kumar and Aadya Variyath of Tamil Nadu *PHOTO: PTI*

Karunakaran-Variyath pair keeps India's hope alive

JAKARTA, 4 JUNE

Sathish Kumar Karunakaran and Aadya Variyath entered the mixed doubles second round of the Indonesia Open Super 1000 badminton tournament. Still, all other Indian pairs in the draw exited after opening losses here on Wednesday.

Karunakaran and Variyath rallied to beat Chinese Taipei's Ye Hong Wei and Nicole Gonzales Chan 15-21, 21-16, 21-17 in a 45-minute tough opening-round contest.

But there was heartbreak for other Indian pairs in the event as they failed to progress to the next round.

Rohan Kapoor and Ruthvika Shivani Gadde were shown the door by the Japanese combination of Yuichi Shimogami and Sayaka Hobara, 14-21, 9-21.

Ashith Surya and Amrutha Pramuthesh lost 15-21, 9-21 to Denmark's Mads Vestergaard and Christine Busch.

Dhruv Kapila and Tanisha Crasto also had to endure the same fate as they lost 11-21, 21-16, 14-21 against second seeds Tang Jie Chen and Ee Wei Toh of Malaysia. —*PTI*

Indian women's hockey players *PHOTO: PTI*

India to open Women's AC campaign against Thailand

NEW DELHI, 4 JUNE

The Indian women's hockey team will open its Asia Cup campaign against Thailand on September 5 before taking on defending champions Japan and Singapore, Hockey India announced on Wednesday.

The Indian team, which claimed the bronze medal in the previous edition, is placed in Pool B along Japan, Thailand and Singapore while Pool A consists of hosts China, Korea, Malaysia, and Chinese Taipei.

The tournament is set to take place in Hangzhou, China, from 5 to 14 September, and the winner will get a direct qualification to the 2026 World Cup.India's second match will be against Japan on 6 September, followed by the final Pool B contest against Singapore on 8 September.

"Being placed in Pool B alongside defending champions Japan will test our skills and character from the very start.

However, facing them in the pool stage will be a great opportunity to measure ourselves early in the tournament," India captain Salima Tete said."Our focus will be on playing smart, disciplined hockey and taking it one match at a time.

The ultimate goal is to lift the trophy and earn a direct spot in the 2026 women's FIH Hockey World Cup.

"Echoing Salima's sentiments, vice-captain Navneet Kaur said, "It will be a challenging tournament with Asia's top teams competing with each other, but we see it as a chance to bring out our best right from the first whistle."

"We've been training with intensity and purpose, and we will aim to execute our plans on the field during the tournament. —*PTI*

RCB fans near Vidhana Soudha gathered in large numbers to take a glimpse of the players who arrived in Bengaluru on Wednesday. State government organised a felicitation function for the RCB players for their victory in the IPL *PHOTO: MOHAMMED ASAD*

India loses to Thailand in FIFA international friendly

NEW DELHI, 4 JUNE

Poor performance from India. They looked rusty at the start and then just could not find ways to execute a goal.

The Blue Tigers created a lot of chances but just could not convert any. Thailand started on the front foot and took the lead in just the seventh minute. The hosts managed to stay strong in defence as Indian attacks were blunted with supreme success from the Thai backline.

Thailand doubled its lead in the second half, and India just could not do much. A poor outing that results in a 2-0 loss for the Blue Tigers. The game is vital in the Blue Tigers' preparation for the AFC Asian Cup 2027 Qualifiers clash with Hong Kong on 10 June. —*PTI*

Jannik Sinner trounces Alexander Bublik 6-1, 7-5, 6-0 in straight sets to reach the Roland Garros semifinal *PHOTO: @JANNIKSIN*

Gauff beats Keys to reach SFs

PARIS, 4 JUNE

Coco Gauff huffed and puffed into the French Open semi-finals with a 6-7(6) 6-4 6-1 victory against fellow American Madison Keys in a match both players will be quick to forget as they broke the 100-unforced errors barrier on Wednesday.

More than half of Gauff's points came from Australian Open champion Keys' soft mistakes, and the world No. 2 got away with a total of 10 double faults. The 21-year-old will need to make dramatic adjustments when she faces either France's Lois Boisson or Russian sixth seed Mirra Andreeva for a place in Sunday's final. Keys, who was looking to reach the last four at Roland Garros for the second time after 2018, bowed out with her 60th unforced error to end a forgettable contest.

Lois Boisson Stuns Mirra Andreeva

French sensation Lois Boisson delivered a stunning display to upset Mirra Andreeva in the quarter-finals of the 2025 French Open. The 22-year-old wildcard prevailed 7-6(6), 6-3 against world No 6 Andreeva on Court Philippe-Chatrier to continue her fairytale Roland Garros run. Boisson twice battled back from a breakdown and saved a set point before taking a thrilling opening set on a tiebreak. The Frenchwoman fell 0-3 down in the second set, but won the next six games to seal a remarkable victory over the 18-year-old Russian star.—*PTI*

NORWAY CHESS

Gukesh, Arjun Erigaisi in title contention

STAVANGER, 4 JUNE

World champion D Gukesh and Arjun Erigaisi have caught the imagination of chess aficionados by queering the pitch for the likes of Magnus Carlsen and Hikaru Nakamura, as the Indian duo makes a Norway Chess title bid when the tournament recommences Thursday after a rest day.

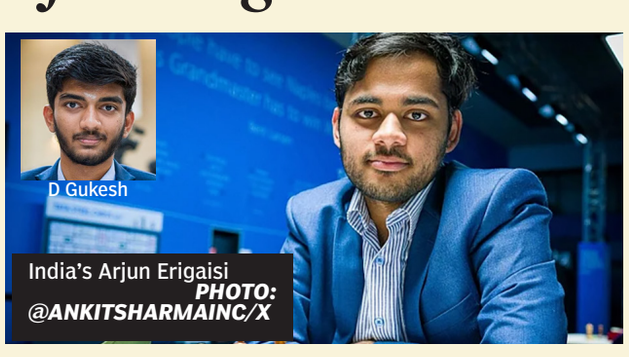
With eight rounds completed, and just two more to go, Gukesh placed third with 11.5 points and Erigaisi, with 10.5 points, are in contention for the title in a tournament which has never been won by an Indian.

Gukesh, after an unimpressive start in the tournament, has played some tenacious chess to stage a remarkable comeback in the six-player double round-robin tournament. He began with losses in his first two games against world No.1 Carlsen and Erigaisi.

Just when Gukesh seemed to have hit a nice rhythm by beating Carlsen and Erigaisi in Rounds 6 and 7, respectively, the 19-year-old suffered a massive blow at the hands of Nakamura, who inflicted a morale-shattering blow to the Indian in Round 8 on Tuesday.

The rest day would have given Gukesh plenty of time to introspect and chart his next move, given that one more defeat in the tournament could make things virtually impossible for him.

Gukesh will take on China's Wei Yi in Round 9, someone who has beaten him in the sudden-death Armageddon tie-break in Round 5. Wei Yi's eight points and sixth position on the table are not a true reflection of his grit and determination. —*PTI*



Contenders eye 'big titles' as Nations League final 4 kicks off

LONDON, 4 JUNE

The Nations League semi-finals start on Wednesday with Germany, Spain, France, and Portugal seeking to fine-tune their sides with the World Cup just one year away. Tournament hosts Germany face Portugal in Munich on Wednesday, and title holders Spain face France in Stuttgart a day later. The winners will face off in the Bavarian capital on Sunday. Created in 2018, the Nations League lacks the history and esteem of football's major international tournaments and has been criticised for adding to an already crowded calendar.

But as Spain and France have shown in recent years, the competition can be a perfect launchpad to reach greater heights.

France's Nations League triumph in 2021 came just over a year before their run to the World Cup final in Qatar, where they lost on penalties to a Lionel Messi-inspired Argentina.

Spain, runners-up against France in 2021, beat Croatia on penalties to win the 2023 Nations League; a year later, the Spanish were crowned Euro 2024 champions. —*PTI*